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"Cedar Chips"

Compiled

by a

Sister of Mercy

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Preface

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

To know and to realize are just a trifle less far apart than to know and not to know. The superb pictures so often painted against the oriental sky—framed by receding night and the horizon—just at the break of day, are well known but badly realized and consequently poorly appreciated. The exceptional one, who does realize, has an enraptured tingle shot through every fiber of his sentient being and every faculty of his soul. Admiration, reverence, praise and love of the Omnipotent Artist thrill the extremes of his nature. The one who knows only, rarely looks up a second time, and thus it comes that even the Master's work is held commonplace. Just a glance and nothing more.

This phenomenon is urged in justification of the present book, "Cedar Chips," hacked from "Under the Cedars and the Stars" and "Parerga," by Canon Sheehan. The compiler claims no merit except that of new combinations which she, a student and teacher, hopes may attract a more adequate recognition to the originals. Efforts along this line may be applauded, too, in these days of Free Libraries, Circulating Libraries, Carnegie Libraries and the rest; particularly, if one may pin one's faith to Emerson's dictum: "The Colleges furnish us no professors of books and I think no chair is so much needed." May this book find an honored place on the literary Signal Corps. Prosit!

JOHN J. McCABE.

Wilkes-Barré, Pa.
January twentieth, nineteen thirteen

The selections from "Under the Cedars and the Stars" and "Parerga" are used by permission of the author, Rev. P. A. Canon Sheehan, D. D., and the publishers, Messrs. Benziger, and Messrs. Longmans, Green, and Co., to whom I am indebted for this kindness.

THE COMPILER.

To Our Lady of Mercy

I "have been at a great feast and stolen the scraps."

"Selections have their justification. They serve a double object,—to introduce and to remind. They provide the unadventurous reader with the easiest way to learn a little of an author he feels he ought to know; and they recall the fruits of fuller study to the memories of those who have passed on to other fields."

Fenelon

What a wonderful camera is the mind! The sensitized plate can only catch the material picture painted by the sunlight. The *tabula rasa* of the mind can build or paint its own pictures from the black letters of a book. Here is a little series that crossed the diorama of imagination this afternoon. A great bishop, reading his own condemnation from his pulpit, and setting fire with his own hand to a pile of his own books there upon the square of his cathedral at Cambrai; and then constructing out of all his wealth a monstrance of gold, the foot of which was a model of his condemned book, which he thus placed under the feet of Christ, so that every time he gave Benediction, he proclaimed his own humiliation.

Lacordaire

Number two picture is that of a great preacher of world-wide reputation, going down into the crypts of the cathedral that was still echoing with the thunders of his eloquence; and whilst the enthusiastic audience was filing from the doors, and every lip was murmuring: "Marvelous!" "Wonderful," "Unequalled," stripping himself bare and scourging his shoulders with the bitter discipline, until it became clogged with his blood, he murmuring, as each lash fell: *"Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam."*

The Curé of Ars

Number three is that of a lowly village church hidden away from civilization in a low-lying valley in the south of France. It is crowded, it is always crowded, night and day; and the air is thick with the respiration of hundreds of human beings, who linger and hover about the place, as if they could not tear themselves away. No wonder! There is a saint here. He is the attraction. It is evening. The Angelus has just rung. And a pale, withered, shrunken figure emerges from the sacristy and stands at the altar rails. Insignificant, old, ignorant, his feeble voice scarcely reaches the front bench. There is seated an attentive listener, drinking in with avidity the words of this old parish priest. He is clothed in black and white. He is the mighty preacher of Notre Dame, and he sits, like a child, at the feet of M. Vianney.

Lamennais

Number four is a lonely chateau, hidden deep in the woods of France, away from civilization. It has an only occupant—a lonely man. He wanders all day from room to room, troubled and ill at ease. His mind is a horrible burden to himself. He is a sufferer from a spiritual tetanus. He cannot say: *Peccavi!* nor *Miserere!* He comes to die. Prayers are said for him in every church and convent in France. The Sister of Charity by his bedside presents the last hope—the crucifix. He turns aside from the saving mercy and dies—impenitent. Three days later, after he has been buried, like a beast, without rites, his brother arrives in haste. The rooms are empty. The dead sleep on. The despairing and broken-hearted priest rushes from chamber to chamber, wringing his hands and crying: Oh, mon frère! mon frère!

Latent Power of the Priesthood

It is said, the brute creation knows not its power. If it did, it might sweep man from the earth. The same is said of woman; the same of the Moslem, in reference to European civilization; the same of the Tartar hordes. Might we not without disrespect say: The Catholic priesthood knows not its power. If it did, all forms of error should go down before it. The concentrated force of so many thousand intellects, the pick and choice of each nation under heaven, the very flower of civilization, emancipated, too, from all domestic cares, and free to pursue in the domains of thought that subject for which each has the greatest aptitude, should bear down with its energy and impetuosity the tottering fabrics of human ingenuity or folly. Here, as in most other places, are hundreds who, freed from the drudgery of great cities, the mechanical grinding of daily and uninspiring work, are at liberty to devote themselves to any or every branch of literature or science. They resemble nothing so much as the sentinels posted on far steppes on the outskirts of civilization, with no urgent duty except to keep watch and ward over tranquil, because unpeopled, wastes; and to answer, now and again from the guard on its rounds, the eternal question: "What of the night, watchman? Watchman, what of the night?" "Ay," saith someone, pursuing the simile, "but suppose the guard finds the sentinel with a book, not a musket, in his hands, what then?" Well, then, the student-sentinel is promptly court-martialled and shot!

And it was of these, sentinels of the West, that the very unjust and bigoted Mosheim wrote: "These Irish were lovers of learning, and distinguished themselves in these times of ignorance by the culture of the sciences beyond all the European nations; the first teachers of the scholastic philosophy in Europe, and who, so early as the eighth century, illustrated the doctrines of religion by the principles of philosophy."

Cataract Days

Timanthes, unable to express the grief of Agamemnon at the death of Ipphigenia, painted the father with head covered and face enveiled. And the sun, unable to bear the horror of the death of Nature, veils his face from us these short days of winter. Ay, indeed, they are dark days! Just a kind of mournful twilight between the night and the night. And what is worse, it is a weeping twilight. We have no cold until January and February; but drip! drip! drip! comes the rain all day long, flooding rivers, filling swamps, creating lakelets everywhere; and all night long it is the same soft swish of rain, rain, rain upon the roof, flooding the shoots beneath the eaves, dripping from the bare trees; and you can hear the channels running flooded to the river, and see the swollen river sweeping noiselessly to the sea. Oh, but it is dreary, dreary, like the moated grange, and the "rusted nail, that held the pear to the garden wall." Yet these days, too, have their enjoyments. I confess I like a real, downright wet day. Not one that is rainy by fits and starts, so that you must go out and get muddy boots and dripping mackintosh; but a day when the conduits of the sky are turned on fully, and the great sheets come down steadily, steadily, or beat in fitful gusts against your windows, and wash them clean; and the most hopeful weather-prophet, scanning every quarter of the sky, cannot see the faintest break of white cloud to warrant him in presaging that, sooner or later, it will clear. We have plenty of these "cataract" days in Ireland; and they are simply delightful.

Their Advantages

Delightful? Yes, to be sure. And first, you have the intense joy of unbroken solitude. You are alone —absolutely alone for a whole day! The knocker is muffled; the bell is silent. No foolish people who want to waste an hour on you, will venture forth today. Those who have real business to transact, will defer it. Then your conscience is at rest. If you do stir up the fragrant wood-fire, and watch the merry blazes dance up the deep chimney, and wheel over your armchair, and take up your latest purchase, crisp and clean from the publisher, or musty and stained from the second-hand "catalogue," there are no qualms about luxurious idleness; no thought of that country-school to be visited, or that horrid scandal to be unearthed, or that grimy lane to be patrolled. You cannot go out—that is all about it! There, listen! Swish go the cataracts; patter, patter go the bullets of rain on your windows! The whole landscape is blotted out in a mist of smoke; gray sheets of water are steered across the fields and trees by the jealous wind; little jets of brown liquid are thrown up from the puddles in the streets where the rain-drops strike them. The channels are choked with the eager running of the streamlets from the streets; the brown river sweeps majestically along. There is no use in trying. You *cannot* go out. Wheel your chair closer; watch for a moment, for the greater enjoyment, the desolation and death without. Then glance at the ruddy flame; and, finally, bury yourself deep, deep in your book. No fear of interruption; one, two, three hours pass by in that glorious interchange of ideas. Life has nothing better to offer you. Enjoy it while you may!

Faded Letters

How you would hate the miserable optimist, who, intruding on such sacred seclusion, would say with a knowing look: "'Tis clearing away in the west! There is a break down there behind the trees; we will have a fine afternoon!" Imagine, a sickly, pallid winter sun looking down on such a wet, bedraggled landscape; and, in unholy alliance with your conscience, ordering you away from that cheerful, neighborly fire! And how you would bless the cheerful croaker, who, looking north, south, east and west, would shake his head sadly, and say: "No stirring abroad to-day! You wouldn't drive a dog from your door in such weather!! We shall have forty-eight hours' continuous rain!" Forty-eight hours! Think of it! Think of it! How we will poke in long-forgotten drawers, and look up old accounts, and see how extravagant we were in our heyday, and examine old diaries, and re-read century-old letters. There, you took them up by chance, and now, entranced, you sit on the edge of a chair, or on an open trunk, and read, read, till your eyes grow dim with fatigue, or—tears. Ah! indeed, the letter, frayed and yellow, is almost falling to pieces in your hands. You hold it together with an effort.

Letter by letter, the old familiar handwriting begins to dawn on you, and you read. It is all "dear" or "dearest," and "Surely you must have known that I never intended to hurt," and "Are you not oversensitive, dear, and too prone to take offence?" and "Come over informally this evening, and let us forget." You poise the letter in your fingers and try to remember. Yes! you wrote a dignified and very cutting letter in reply; and a great sea evermore rolled between you and the friend, whose face these many years has been upturned to the stars. Or it is a letter from a child at school, largely printed and ill-spelled, asking you for a little favor. You refused it, as a duty, of course, as if there were any duty to one another in this world but love. Or, it is from a poor friend, who has gone down in the struggle, and is in sore distress, and begs "for auld lang syne" to help him. You could have spared that twenty or fifty dollars easily; but you were prudent. You argued: He is extravagant; 'tis his own fault. It will be a lesson to refuse him. Alas! you wouldn't have liked to see his face as he read your letter. He has long since sunk beneath the current; and his children are begging their bread. Well, fold it up, but don't burn it. It is a voice from the grave.

Kant and Fichte

I do not think there is any circumstances in the even life of Immanuel Kant, that is more painful to his admirers than his cold refusal of a few ducats to poor Fichte, to help the latter back to his native province. And I think there is hardly on record a more touching and dignified letter than this appeal of Fichte's, wrung from him only by the direst distress. "By a residence in my native province, I could most easily obtain, as a village pastor, the perfect literary quiet which I desire until my faculties are matured. My best course thus seems to be to return home;—but I am deprived of the means; I have only two ducats, and even these are not my own, for I have yet to pay for my lodgings. There appears then to be no rescue for me from this situation, unless I can find someone who, in reliance on my honor, will advance me the necessary sum for the expenses of my journey, until the time when I can calculate with certainty on being able to make repayment. I know no one to whom I could offer this security without fear of being laughed at to my face, except you. * * * I am so convinced of a certain sacrifice of honor in thus placing it in pledge, that the very necessity of giving you this assurance seems to deprive me of a part of it myself; and the deep shame which thus falls upon me is the reason why I cannot make an application of this kind verbally, for I must have no witness of that shame. My honor seems to me really doubtful until that engagement is fulfilled, because it is always possible for the other party to suppose that I may never fulfil it."

He never added, poor fellow, that in the background, behind the imagined vicarage, was the form of his betrothed, Johanna Rahn, who was only waiting for these reluctant ducats to become the faithful wife that she proved herself to be in all the after-years.

A Refusal

Now it is quite certain that no one can read that letter without sharing the sense of shame, that must have suffused the face of the writer, and tingled in his fingers as he wrote it. And no one can read of Kant's refusal—gentleman, scholar, and philosopher, as he was—without feeling equal shame. And yet how different are the sentiments. The one is the shame of great pity; the other, the shame of disappointment. We are sorry for Fichte, because he is reduced to so pitiable a condition even of honorable mendicancy; we are sorry for Kant, because of his "lost opportunities." But we would retain for ever the letter of the former, as a relic of honorable shame; we would gladly forget the refusal of the latter, as a stain on a great reputation.

L. S. D.

Ah me! those accounts—Dr. and Cr. and L.S.D.! What desperate plungers and wastrels we all were in our heyday! What a stoical contempt we had for money! That picture which we fancied, and which the dealer assured us was a real Van Dyck; that vast encyclopedia; twelve guineas for that Tissot's Life of Christ, which we instantly gave away, becauce of its horrid French realism; that summer vacation—how that hotel bill did mount up! We shake our heads mournfully over ourselves—ourselves, mind, of the past, not ourselves of the present—there we are always devout idolaters! But those items—Charity 2s. 6d.; charity 5s.; charity 15s.; charity 20s.; are these, too, regrettable? Happily, no! We cast our bread upon the running waters; and, after many days, it was returned.

Diaries

And these diaries! Dear me! How brief your life's history! Into how small a space have you concentrated the thoughts, ideas, desires, emotions, passions, that swayed you for so many years! That day, so full of hope, or shame, or sorrow, or ambition, or anxiety—how swiftly you have dismissed it in one line! You remember you thought it would never end. You thought that suspense intolerable, that affront unbearable, that injury irreparable. You took a despondent view of life, a despairful view of men. You said in your anger: *Omnis homo mendax!* How little it all looks now. What a speck in the vistas of years! How childish now seem your anger, your impatience, your fretfulness! How keenly you realize that the worst evils are those which never occur! You worked yourself into a fever of passion over possibilities. You saw ahead but rapids, and shallows and rocks. Lo! your life has glided smoothly over all; and you smile at the perils that encompassed you. And that bitter disappointment—that misunderstanding which threatened such dire ruin to your prospects, lo! it has gone by harmlessly; and you are ashamed of your vindictiveness and hate and childish apprehensions. The great wave that came on threatening to engulf you, you have buoyantly surmounted; and you are out on the great high seas, whilst it has passed onward, and broken harmlessly on the shore.

We look before and after, and pine for what is not. Foolish enough! Live in the present; and pull down a thick veil over the future, leaving it in God's hands. Live, live, in the present, sucking out of the hours of life all the honey they will yield.

Mors aurem vellens, "Vivite," ait, "Venio."

Their Teachings

But there is a somewhat different lesson to be gathered from these same old, frayed, and yellow records of the past. I have purposely omitted the first line of the quotation, which runs thus:

> Pone merum talosque; pereant qui crastina curant;
> Mors aurem vellens, "Vivite," ait, "Venio."

I rather like that picture of grim Death, flicking the ear of his victim, and whispering: "Make the most of it, old fellow, I'm coming for you soon." But the "pone merum talosque" sounds very like old Omar; and after all, this voluptuous life won't do. All men are agreed upon that, except that most miserable class of men of whom perhaps Des Esseintes in Huysman's novel is a type; and who closes his worthless, pleasure-seeking life by a fate that seems sufficient retribution: *Sur le chemin, dégrisé, seul, abominablement lassé.* Neither will it do to seek that milder Epicurean paradise in which without labor, or suffering, and merely by mental training and mind-abstraction, there is perfect and profound peace. I do not say that men should not practice mind discipline so perfectly that they can shake off easily the minor worries of life. This is very desirable. Nay, it should be a part of all education, to teach that the will is paramount, that the minor faculties must obey it, and that a memory that loves to go back upon remorse, or an imagination that is prone to dwell on a perilous future, must be curbed by the superior power, and learn to abide in the present. But this is a long distance away from the religious peace connoted by the famous lines of St. Teresa:

Nada te turbe!	Let nothing trouble thee!
Nada te espante!	Let nothing frighten thee!
Todo se passa.	All things pass away.
Dios no se muda!	God alone is immutable!
La pacienza	Patience obtains everything.
Todo lo alcanza.	
Nada te falta:	He who possesses God wants nothing:
Solo Dios basta!	God alone suffices.

Peace Through Holiness

Philosophy has aimed at the former. Religion has secured the latter. That perfect peace—the Nirvana of the Asiatics—has never been attained by mortal; cannot indeed be obtained until after the soul has migrated from being to being, and has become so attenuated that it has lost self-consciousness. To attempt this in ordinary life is to fail. It seems easy to say: Abstract your mind from all earthly things; let men be as shadows beneath you; live in the higher atmosphere of thought, and dwell alone with your own soul; let neither love, nor vanity, nor ambition, nor any earthly desire have place in your heart; and you will know what is meant by perfect peace. Alas! we have struck our roots too deeply into the earth to root them thus up remorselessly without pain: and the more we seek such peace the farther will it fly from us. What then? Is there something better? Something higher? No! there is nothing higher than perfect peace; but it must be peace through holiness. In other words, there is no use in abstracting ourselves from earth, if we cling to self. After all, it is self that torments us; and if we could wean ourselves from all things else, so long as self remains, there is no perfect peace.

Cardinal Newman

I was rather struck with this thought on reading Hutton's monograph on Cardinal Newman. It is not very interesting reading, because it is too philosophical, in the sense that it is too synthetic. We all like analysis of character—the drawing asunder and unravelling of the various threads that make up human life. But when an author begins to draw big conclusions on things in general from these threads, it is apt to weary. But, it is wholesome to learn that the great Cardinal did, in early life, grasp the principle that "Holiness is better than peace!" It seems a paradox, under one aspect, because we generally understand that peace is the concomitant, or result, of holiness. But the meaning clearly is that the soul that seeks peace without holiness will never find it; that life, an imperfect thing, is inseparable from trial; that difficulties are to be overcome, not to be avoided; that the soul that shrinks into itself behind the ramparts of philosophic thought, will be discovered, and that cares will creep over the wall; and that, finally, it is only by self-abandonment, and the annihilation of our own wills that we can foreshadow in life the peace of eternity. This is what the Lord meant when he said: "*My* peace I leave unto you; *my* peace I give unto you! Not as the world gives, do I give unto you!"

The Luxury of Unhappiness

Nevertheless, whilst all this is true, there are secondary helps in reflection which are not to be despised. And one of these comes from retrospection. Remorse for failures or mistakes is foolish. They are part and parcel of our imperfection. The past should not be allowed to cast a shadow of gloom on the present, nor to project itself across our future. But it has its lessons—the supreme one, that anxiety is not only want of faith, but foolish in the extreme; and the other, a lesson of supreme gratitude to the merciful Providence who has ordered our lives so peacefully. The little souls that fume and fret under the little worries and vexations of life, should often take up their diaries and read them. There they will see how trifling were the things that poisoned their daily happiness; how insignificant the grains of dust that made the discord of their lives. A little courage would have brushed that dust aside and restored the soul to harmony and happiness. But no! we preferred the luxury of knowing that we were unhappy; and grudged ourselves the little labor that would have restored concord and peace. Nay, most people nurse their miseries, and help them to grow, as if they believed that the monotony of peace were undesirable; and that a life varied by vexations were preferable to a calm and equable existence free from worry, and mapped without the red or black lines that connote disaster or suffering.

Hospitals

Then, I would make such little souls walk the hospitals at least once a year. Nothing reconciles the unhappy to their lot, but to see others suffer more, and to see what they themselves have escaped. The philosopher who suffers from *taedium vitae,* the fine lady who is *ennuyée,* the querulous, the discontented, should see the possibilities of suffering that are, alas! the inheritance of our race. Here, within earshot of the busy hum of city life, is a staid building. No pretense to architecture without; within, everything sacrificed to cleanliness and neatness. A few yards away, on the pavements of the great city, the votaries of Vanity are sweeping by, their little frames filled out and decorated with all the appliances that Art and Fashion can invent. They walk with the proud gait, the stately movements of young gods and goddesses. The earth is theirs; and theirs is the heritage of the sky and sea. Here, ranged in long rows, are the couches of their suffering sisters. Very low and humble they are, as their breasts heave with the convulsions of difficult breathing, for that tiny occult mechanism has built him a resting-place in their lungs, and is living by exhausting their life. Round, lustrous eyes, hectic cheeks, dry, hot hands, wet hair, are their signs and symbols of disease; and creosote, formaldehyde, carbolic, have taken the place of the White Rose, or Heliotrope, which they shook from their raiment only a little while hence, as they spurned the very pavement beneath their feet.

Prisons and Asylums

Here again is another Temple of Hygeia, or rather of Death, for in these cancerous and tubercular cases the fair goddess is ruthlessly expelled by the skeleton god. Tossing on couches of pain, their entrails gnawed by the fell disease, or visibly rotting away from the disease in cheek, or tongue, or teeth, or breast, the poor victims linger on through a hell of agony, and invoke the King of Terrors in vain. And here is another Temple where some two thousand are lodged,—being once rational, but now with reason dethroned,—helpless, animals, ships without a rudder, tossed hither and thither through the stormy seas of their imaginings, with no power of guiding and directing themselves through the fierce impulses of animal instincts and desires. It is a cage for wild beasts. Witness the iron-barred windows, the padded cell, the various instruments of restraint, the strong men and women to cope with the paroxysms of insanity. And this is a Temple of Justice, wherein the elements dangerous to society are incarcerated. A thousand cells radiate from a central hall. In each is an outcast. Seated on a plank bed, staring at white-washed walls, fed like a beast through an aperture, each wretched soul ponders on his misery, eats his heart with remorse, or curses that society which, for its own safety and well-being, thinks it necessary to separate him from the rest of his fellow-mortals thus.

Minor Evils

And so, side by side, the gay and the sorrowful, Fortune's darlings and Destiny's victims, move, in a kind of Holbein picture, toward the inevitable. Now, who hath cast the dice, and appointed the lots of each? It is not merit, for in most cases my Lady of pain on her couch of suffering is a very much superior being to my Lady of pleasure on the pavement. But that is not the question now. The question now is, how can you repine at trifles, and fret yourself to death over imaginary troubles, like Molière's *Le Malade,* when you have escaped the coffin, the hospital, the gaol, the Bedlam, and all their terrible concomitants? And if you have come to middle age, or have mounted the mid-hill and crest of life, and are passing peacefully into the valley, how can you repine, when you have left so much misery behind you, and the fair vista of an honored old age stretches before you. Oh, but that disappointment! That success of my neighbor's! That prosperous marriage! That successful speculation! He taken and I left! He with ten thousand a year, and I with only five! And he, with ten letters after his honored name, and I with only six! Avaunt, thou ingrate! That who hast never proven—

> How salt a savor hath
> The bread of others, and how hard a path
> To climb and to descend the stranger's stairs.

An Examination of Life

I would put side by side, in parallel columns with the Table of Sins in every Catholic prayer-book, an examination of escaped horrors thus:—

Hast thou ever been under the surgeon's knife? Hast thou ever seen the doctors in their white waterproofs, or bloodproofs, gaily chatting in the operating room, and testing the edges of their knives, and thou on the table? Hast thou seen the sponges and the lint, and the splinters, and the hot-water, and the nurses standing by the table watching thee? Hast thou ever known the sickening odor of the anæsthetic, which is to send thee into the unknown bourn, from which thou mayst never return? Hast thou ever had sentence of death passed on thee by thy physician? That cough is phthisis; that little nodule of flesh is incipient cancer; that flush and chill is typhus; that sudden pain in thy left arm is cardiac trouble; that inability to grasp thy pen is incipient paralysis; that strange hesitation about thy words is brain disease. Hast thou ever dreaded the slow approach of insanity? Hast thou, like a certain great Cardinal, lived all thy life beneath its horrible shadow? Hast thou fallen into the grip of the law, and carried with thee the indelible stain of the prison? Nay, do not frown down the question as impertinent. Did not Philip Neri say to Philip, as he saw a criminal haled to execution: There thou goest, Philip, but for the grace of God! And if thou hast escaped all these things, and the many more too numerous to mention, go down on thy knees and thank thy God for His mercies!

The Veil of Mercy

Thank God for the greatest mercy of all—that He has drawn down an impenetrable veil over thy future; and lifts the curtains of thy destiny, only fold by fold, and day by day. What would it be if the same Hand had unrolled for thee the map of thy life, and shown thee in thy adolescence all the terrors of thy future years? How thou wouldst have glided over the pleasure of thy existence with indifference, and fastened the eyes of thy imagination on the dangers and the pitfalls, the sorrows and the shames, that are marked so clearly on the diagram of thy existence! How thou wouldst extenuate and make little of life's pleasures; and exaggerate its pains! And with what terrible foreboding wouldst thou approach crisis after crisis in thy life; and forget the chance of victory in the dread of defeat! Verily, God is merciful! It is only to His great martyrs, most of all to the Queen of Martyrs, that He reveals the far-off Mount of Suffering; and allows the shadow of the three crosses cast by the setting sun of Olivet to darken the pathway of an entire life!

The Ordering of Destiny

I wonder, is there a human being who would willingly take the ordering of his destiny out of the hands of Divine Providence, and cast the horoscope of his own life? Would he accept the proposal if made to him thus:

"Now you can frame and form your future according to your own desires. You can have all that the human heart may desire—wealth, position, honors, influence, old age. But you must accept with them their concomitants; and the burden of your own imperfections. You can frame your future destiny; but you must bear it on your own shoulders; and look for no assistance from above."

No Christian believer would accept such a proposal; and it is doubtful even if a pure Agnostic would not shrink from the responsibility. We might elect to have the framing of our own futures, bit by bit; but to round our whole lives in the circle of our fantasies and wishes is a something we would shrink from. And then there is always the possibility of disappointment and defeat with the self-reproach that would accompany both, if we made our own election. *Now*, if we fail, the failing is not of our own choosing. We can place it at the door of Destiny; or, with higher faith and meekness we can say it is the Will of God. But the sense of responsibility and remorse is absent, which would not be the case if disaster and defeat followed close in the wake of the voyage we had mapped for ourselves along the high seas of life. There! What a meditation I have made over an open trunk! !

Philosophers and Poets

I have two constant, never varying loves—my philosophers and my poets. I cannot conceive a greater mental pleasure or stimulant than the study of mental philosophy. It is, after all, the *great* study. It is so clear, so defined, so perfect in definition and principle and axiom, that you feel quite safe and walking on level ground, until suddenly the great gulf yawns under your feet, and beneath you is roaring the unplummeted sea. You look down, down. It is crystal-clear, but no soundings. Here Plato gazed, and Aristotle pondered! Here Kant watched during his ninety years, only to turn away sadly in the end. Here, too, our child-philosophers of this unthinking age, fling their little lines weighted with modern discoveries. Alas! they will not even sink beneath the surface. And the great deeps are still unfathomed, and the great gulf unspanned. And yet the quest is not unfruitful. If it only taught humility, it would be a great gain. But it does more. It is like the vision of the Holy Grail that:

> Drove them from all vainglories, rivalries,
> And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
> Among us in the jousts, while women watch
> Who wins, who falls; and waste the spiritual strength
> Within us, better offered up to Heaven.

At least, we know of no dishonored Knight of Philosophy. Votaries of other sciences may be impure. And alas! for our poets—the sacred fire does not always burn up carnal concupiscence. But Philosophy seems always to have kept her clients clean from grosser appetites and fleshly desires; and if they erred, it was through the spirit, and not through the flesh.

The Victim of Envy

It would seem that Lord Macaulay, the most successful man of letters of his generation, did experience that fine tonic of strong minds—the envy and jealousy of his contemporaries. It is strange that this curious and venomous antagonism does not seem to enter the sacred precincts of Art, nor yet the domain of Science. The reason is evident. Only experts who had passed through a professional training will venture to criticise a picture, or offer an opinion on a new discovery in Science. But in literature, everyone is qualified to judge; and to reject or accept, condemn or magnify a new appearance. Philosophy, however, has her atonements and consolations. All will pass! It is the book-mark of St. Teresa over again—honor, dishonor; the smile, the sneer; the glory, the gibe; the laurel, the thorn; all will pass:

Yes, they will pass away; nor deem it strange;
They come and go, as comes and goes the sea;
And let them come and go; thou, through all change
Fix thy firm gaze on Virtue and on me!

St. Augustine and Maine de Biran

I dare say this idea of the limitation of human action and feeling, and the eternal craving after the infinite and illimitable in the human mind can be seen exemplified in most human lives. Especially is it observable in men of thought or fine sensibilities. But I have seen it confessed clearly only in two lives, that of St. Augustine, as revealed in his *Confessions;* and that of Maine de Biran, as revealed in his *Thoughts*. This latter was one of those unhappy mortals, who to their own sorrow, but the everlasting benefit of mankind, have been tortured by nerves. He was so finely constructed that his emotions swayed to the slightest touch, swinging low down in the deepest depression at a word or look or a reverse or a dyspepsia; and again thrown high into the empyrean of exalted reflection by equally minute and trifling causes. These *Pensées* would be pitiful reading were they not relieved here and there by gleams of inspiration—great lightning-flashes of thought athwart the low thunder clouds of despondency. His life was an alternation of desires for solitude when in society, and impatience of self when in solitude. "La commerce des hommes," he writes, "m'a gâté et me gâte tous les jours"; but he was forever craving for their companionship amongst the woods and waters of Grateloup. "I walk like a somnambulist in the world of affairs." But when it came to the point to choose, he refused to say the word, and turned back to politics. He is a stranger amidst the pomps and ceremonies of the French Court; he hates himself for his presence there, and his nervous unsuitableness; but he cannot remain away. He clamors for the infinity of thought in solitude; but craves for the limitations of action in society.

La Soif de Dieu

Very early in life, and long before he became a Christian in thought and feeling, he recognized the dual nature in man; and writes strongly against Voltaire and Condillac, and all the tribe of writers of the sensist or materialist school. He will not admit the sovereignty of sense; he demands the supremacy of the soul. Granted. But does he find peace; the peace for which he is forever clamoring? He admits it is the *summum bonum,* nay, the only good here below. He confesses his contempt for the things which the world prizes. He has seen them, and tested their hollowness. He flies from them and buries himself in the desert of his own soul. The philosophy of the Porch is now his religion. He will be self-sufficing. He will subdue all riotous feeling of passion and even sensation; and, under the arbitrary rule of the soul, he will find peace. He will desire nothing, and therefore want nothing. All shall be harmony of nicely adjusted thoughts and sentiments, of passions subdued and reined by a strong hand; Nature shall yield its manifold treasures of peaceful bliss; and an imagination, rightly controlled, will serve to lift the soul beyond time and death, and project another existence on the canvas of eternity. But the oaks and streams heard still but the agony of a disappointed and despairing soul. Yes! all was satisfied, but the insatiable—*La Soif de Dieu!*

Solitude

He liked, as all such souls like, every line that speaks of the beauty and happiness of a solitary life. And all literature, Divine and human, is replete with those threnodies of the heart—the desire to be away, and at rest. "Would that I had the wings of a dove"; "O for a lodge in some vast wilderness!" Was the author of the "Imitation," merely parodying the words of St. Augustine in all the many curious ways he had of uttering the same thought: *"Noli foras abire; in teipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas!"* And I suppose most people (always excepting the artists themselves) must have felt a little *attendrissement du coeur* at the closing lines of that favorite duet in *Trovatore:* "There shall be rest! there shall be rest!" Certain it is that Maine de Biran was forever craving rest, rest, rest—from the fever of fashion, from the turmoil of politics, from the stings of wasps, the hollowness and insincerity of the world; and he was for ever dreaming, dreaming in the Court of Versailles or at the Tuileries of his woods and walks, of the rustling leaves, the singing of birds, the purling of streams, the peace of the mountains, the solitude of the valleys. Then came the reality. Lo! here is all this sylvan beauty; and here is solitude deep enough for a Bruno! And here is peace, and deep profound thought, and the absorption of the soul in the reveries of metaphysics. Alas, no! or not altogether. A cloudy sky, an indiscretion at table, a look, a word; and lo! the paradise is broken up. So dependent is the soul on the caprices of the body! There are two principles in man—*et primum quod est animale!*

The Equilibrium of Things

"Bene qui latuit, bene vixit!" It was a favorite maxim of Descartes who had also another favorite doctrine, which I recommend earnestly, namely, the sanitary value to mind and body, of long fits of idleness. Maine de Biran would not, and did not, accept the latter. He could not. He was made otherwise, a thing compacted out of nerves, and fed by a planet and a star—by Mercury and Phosphor. He knew well the glorious blessing of such a constitution, and —its curse! He admits that the dull, practical, geometrical reasoner has less joy out of youth, but more security in age. And that if the nervous dreamer and thinker has visions of the gods in his heyday, he must suffer by diabolic apparitions in the evening of his days. It is the eternal equilibrium of things—the just apportionment of fate to mortals. The most careful chemist does not sift and mix on his glass measure the drugs that make for life or death so carefully as the Fates dole out their destinies to mortals. Or, rather, not *destinies*, but the factors of destinies—the powers of action or suffering, of reason and imagination, of mental or physical constituents, that go to construct the sum total of those transient dreams or experiences which we call Life.

Un Philosophe Manqué

But the maxim of Descartes: "Bene qui latuit, bene vixit," he loved it, but did not accept it. Or rather, accepted it only in theory. It is the motto of those who are surfeited by fame, or notoriety; not of those who have never tasted either. Men can despise riches when they possess them; fame, when the fickle goddess woos them. But all men would like to drink from the cup of Tantalus, and grasp the skirts of the phantom, Fame. Yet, Maine de Biran, let it be said, had even a nobler ambition. He deplores the necessity of his taking part in political and social matters to the exclusion of intellectual pursuits, for which he believed he possessed a certain aptitude. And life was passing by; and nothing done. All this externation which he detested, but which arrested every movement towards the life of solitude and retreat which he coveted, induced at least a condition of intellectual atrophy from want of exercise; and he saw himself far advanced into middle age, without the prospect or hope of realizing his one ambition—"avoir laissé quelque monument honorable de son passage sur la terre." A victim of circumstances, a prey to ill-health, with all the power and the desire of becoming the foremost thinker of his age, he remained to the end—*un philosophe manqué.*

Great Writers and the Church

It is strange how great minds invariably turn, by some instinct or attraction, towards this eternal miracle—the Church. Carlyle admits in his extreme old age that the Mass is the most genuine relic of religious belief left in the world. Goethe was for ever introducing the Church into his conversations coupling it with the idea of power, massive strength, and ubiquitous influence. Byron would insist that his daughter, Allegra, should be educated in a convent, and brought up a Catholic, and nothing else. And Ruskin, although he did say some bitter things about us, tells us what a strong leaning he has towards monks and monasteries; how he pensively shivered with Augustinians at St. Bernard; happily made hay with Franciscans at Fiesole; sat silent with the Carthusians in their little gardens south of Florence; and mourned through many a day-dream at Bolton and Melrose. Then he closes his little litany of sympathy with the quaintly Protestant conclusion: But the wonder is always to me, not how much, but how little, the monks have on the whole done, with all that leisure, and all that goodwill.

Ruskin

He cannot understand! That is all. But why? Because he cannot search the archives of Heaven. He knows nothing of the supernatural—of the invisible work of prayer—of work that is worship. He has never seen the ten thousand thousand words of praise that have ascended to the Most High; and the soft dews of graces innumerable that have come down from Heaven in answer to prayer. He has painted, as no one else, except perhaps Carlyle could, the abominations of modern life; and he has flung all the strength of his righteous anger against them. He has never asked himself why God is so patient, whilst John Ruskin rages; or why fire and brimstone are not showered from Heaven, as whilom on the Cities of the Plain. He had read his Bible, year by year, hard words, Levitical laws, comminatory Psalms, from ἐν ἀρχῇ to Amen; and, what is more rare, he believed in it. Yet he never tried to fathom the mystery of the unequal dealings of God with mankind. He never saw the anger of the most High soothed, and his Hand stayed by the midnight prayer and scourge of the Trappist and the Carthusian. Dante could never have written the *Paradiso,* if he had not heard Cistercians chanting at midnight!

Work and Prayer

So, too, he failed to understand how a mountain-monk would positively refuse to go into raptures about crags and peaks; and fix his thoughts on eternity. "I didn't come here to look at mountains," was the abrupt answer of the stern monk to the nineteenth century aesthete. What then? You must think of something, my shaven friend, or go mad. "I thought of the ancient days; I had in mind the eternal years," was the reply. Very profitless employment, certainly, to the eyes of modern wisdom, which believes that "work is worship"; but that worship is not work. How can it be, when you see no visible results—no piling up of shekels, nor hoisting of sky-scrapers, no hoggish slaughter-houses, nor swinish troughs; only psalms that die out in the midnight darkness, and silent prayer from lonely cell away on that snow-clad mountain summit?

The Contemplative Orders

I notice that this is the one feature in Catholicity which the Protestant mind can never understand. It appreciates cordially the Catholic work of rescue—the rescue of the waif from the street, of the Magdalen from the gaol or river, of the drunkard from the bottle, of the gambler from the table, of the orphan from destitution and vice. And so it will tolerate, but only tolerate, educational or charitable institutions or communities—what we call Active Orders. But the Contemplative Orders it cannot understand. Why a number of monks and nuns should be shut up in cloistered seclusion, cut away from all sympathy with human life and endeavor, apparently unproductive and useless factors in the great giant march of progress, is unintelligible. Of course, it is! Because God is unintelligible, or rather ignored. Because all modern religion, outside the Church, develops itself into humanitarianism—that is, positivism—that is, atheism in its crudest and most naked aspect.

God, or Man

In fact, all controversy between the Church and the world is rapidly resolving itself into this: Is God to be placed in the foreground of His universe; or is man? The Church strenuously affirms the former; the world, the latter. The Church says, God is everything; man, nothing, except in God. God, the centre to which all things tend, and from which all things radiate; man, not the apex of creation by any means, only a unit in creation, made sublime by his aspirations, his hopes, his sufferings, and his destiny. A generation that has lost all faith in Thirty-nine Articles or other formulary, seeks vainly for something that will take the place of vanished beliefs. The next thing to hand is humanity—man, the little god of this planet. *Agnoscimus!* we know no more! And the Eternal Church keeps tolling its bell through the world; and the burden of its persistent calling is the monotone of Time, echoed from Eternity: God, and God, and God!

The Thorns of Literature

All successful writers are unanimous in warning off young aspirants from the thorny path of literature. Grant Allen would give them a broom, and bid them take to crossing-sweeping; Gibbon, de Quincey, Scott, Southey, Lamb, Thackeray,—all showed the weals and lashes of the hard taskmaster; amongst moderns, Daudet warns that brain-work is the most exacting of all species of labor, and must eventuate, sooner or later, in a bad break-down; Mr. Zangwill says, somewhat grandiosely: "Whoso with blood and tears would dig art out of his soul, may lavish his golden prime in pursuit of emptiness; or striking treasure, find only fairy gold, so that when his eye is purged of the spell of morning, he sees his hand full of withered leaves." And dear old Sam Johnson, who certainly passed through his Inferno and Purgatorio before he settled down in the comfortable paradise at Streatham, epitomizes his hardships as author in the well-known line:

Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the gaol.

Ambition

Nor can all these aspirants claim the steady nerve and calm philosophy of Jean Paul, who can see in poverty but "the pain of piercing a maiden's ears, that you may hang precious jewels in the wound." It is a bitter thing, a severe initiation into mysteries otherwise unintelligible; and hence it is, I suppose, that with the eternal hope of youth, the ambitious see but the goal and the prize; and like Alpine climbers, undismayed by the fate of others, and utterly oblivious of danger, they refuse to see crevasse or avalanche, or sliding glacier. They only see the peaks far away, shining like amber in the morning sun; and they promise themselves that, at evening, they shall stand on that summit where no foot of mortal had ever trodden before. It is somewhat melancholy; and yet it is the one thing that gives to the biographical part of literature that interest, amounting to sympathy, that is the right of the strong, who have fought their way through difficulties to success.

Balzac and His Sister

It would be well, however, that this sympathy took a practical turn, especially where genius is concerned; and I know no more touching instance of this inspiring hopefulness than the letters of his sister Laura to Balzac. She stood by him and encouraged him, when his parents turned him from the door as a fool, because he gave up the comfortable profession of notary, and took to the dry crusts and rags of literature; she sympathized with all his struggles, rejoiced in all his triumphs; she advised him, controlled him, encouraged him; and she stood by his bedside on that fatal day, August 18, 1850, when, after thirty hours of fearful agony, he died in the city that refused to recognize his talents till after death. A lurid, tempestuous, passionate life—misdirected and misapplied! His biographer told the truth when he said that Paris was a hell, but a hell, the only place worth living in; and of this he vowed to be a Dante. He succeeded but too well; and it would have been better for him and the world if he had left the secrets unrevealed. But, at least, Laura was his Beatrice.

Bohemians

Poor Henry Murger, too! All that one can remember of him is his mother's intense devotion; his horrible disease, *purpura,* which he laughingly declared he wore with a dignity of a Roman Emperor; his chivalric devotion to the Sister of Charity who nursed him in hospital—"A good Sister you were, the Beatrice of that hell. Your soothing consolations were so sweet, that we all complained whenever we had the chance, so as only to be consoled by you;"—his anticipation of O. W. Holmes' poem, "The Voiceless":

> Nous avons cru pouvoir—nous l'avons cru souvent
> Formuler notre rêve, et le rendre vivant
> Par la palette ou par la lyre;
> Mais le souffle manquait, et personne n'a pu
> Deviner quel était le poëme inconnu
> Que nous ne savions pas traduire.

Then, his childish warning off the priests: "Tell them I have read Voltaire." Finally his cry: "Take me to the Church; God can do more than any physician." His final happy death, after receiving the last Sacraments. Poor fellows! with their sad motto: The Academy, the Asylum, or the Morgue! How the heart of a Vincent de Paul, or a Philip Neri, would have yearned over your helplessness and your genius, and wept for your follies and your sins! And how lesser folk would have liked to burst into your attic, and tear your valuable papers from the fire, and send ruddy blazes out of more ready material dancing up the chimney; and pelted you with sandwiches till you cried, Hold! and then sat down with you on a soap-box or on your dingy bed; and filled out in long ruby glasses the Margaux or Lafitte you had not tasted for many a day; and finally settled down to a calm, long, soporific smoke, and listened to the song, the anecdote, the *bon mot,* that would turn the gloom of Phlegethon into an Attic night, and the lentils of a Daniel into a supper of the gods!

Pascal

Pascal, too, found a rare helper and sympathizer in his sister—the Madame Perrier, who wrote his life so briefly, but significantly. Not, indeed that he needed any spiritual strength or support from any external power; for he was a self-contained spirit, and thought little of human help. And his genius was colossal. Like Aristotle he seems to have thought out a whole scheme of creation, unaided. It is rather a singular instance of human folly that he should have been considered a sceptic. There is no stopping the tongues of men. The same charge was levelled against Dr. Newman. Mozeley attributes the great popularity of the Oratorian in England to that. Perhaps there were never two men who believed more intensely and undeservedly. But the Frenchman lacked serenity. He lost his nobility by engaging, not so much in a lost cause, as a bad cause. He descended to cynicism and sarcasm—the expression of a form of lower mental condition. And this, too, affected his greatest, if most imperfect work. When the *Provincial Letters* are forgotten or neglected as splenetic sarcasm, and have passed away like the Junius and Drapier Letters, and have become but the study of the connoisseur, his "Pensées" will remain, broken fragments of an incomplete, but immortal work.

The Judgment of Posterity

What judgment will posterity pass on them? It would be difficult to say. But if we may gauge the future by the present, we would say that the verdict of a more enlightened age than ours will be, that Pascal was no sceptic, though a bold inquirer; that his marvellous mental keenness and vigor were only equalled by his rigid asceticism; that Nature had made him pious, and circumstances made him proud; that these "Thoughts" which reveal to us his inner life are beautiful and deep beyond words; that they would have even the color of that inspiration which comes from Nature and Grace united, were it not for a dark shadow which stretches itself over all, making the philosophy of them less clear, the truth of them less apparent, the study of them a task of anxiety and suspicion, instead of being one of edification and delight.

Renan and His Sister

In fact, I know but of one case where a sister's influence was hurtful; and that was the case of Ernest Renan. It is impossible to explain how a woman, and a Bretonne, could have lent the aid of her sisterly influence to wean him away from the sanctuary, and then from the Church itself. There is something inexpressibly revolting about it, because I think, of all human loves, that of a sister is the most abiding and unselfish. In a mother's love there is a kind of identification with her child, his triumphs, his defeats, which, by the reflection on herself, takes away the absolute disinterestedness. Conjugal love is more intense, but for that reason more intermittent. But there's not a trace of self in that earnest, wistful gaze which a beloved sister casts after the poor young fellow who has just gone out from the sanctity of home-life into the world's arena; nor a thought of self in the way the silent heart broods over shattered hopes, and takes back to its sanctuary the broken relics of the idol, once worshipped, now, alas! only protected from the gaze of a scornful world.

A Vitriolic Censor

Could any punishment be too great for that great critic in the great Quarterly, who boasted to Harriet Martineau, with a sardonic grin, that he was trying to squeeze out a little more (here he used the gesture) oil of vitrol on the head of a poor poet whose verses had unhappily fallen into his hands? He said that he and his collaborateurs were rather disappointed because they could not squeeze as much of the burning fluid into their pens as they would like. And one of them had the reputation of being especially humane in his sympathies; and wept copiously over Burns' address "To a Mouse." I wonder how would that grim Rhadamanthus, Dante Alighieri, apportion them their places in his *Inferno?* How would he equalize their punishment to their crime? Think of the sinking of heart, bitterness of the spirit, the longing for death, which that poor fellow felt when the cruel, stinging sarcasms met his eyes; and the burning drops fell slowly upon his soul! How he yearned to hide himself from the world! How he slunk through the streets, a shadow of shame, and dreaded to meet the eyes of men! How his friends pitied him, and were ashamed of him; and how his enemies gloated over his discomfiture! Yes! what would Dante have done with these criminals? I think I can imagine!

Poet and Friar

I know nothing so melancholy as that cenotaph of Dante in the Church of San Marco in Florence. It is a perpetual act of contrition and humiliation on the part of that famous municipality; or it is a feeble attempt to clasp the shadow of him whose ashes repose in Ravenna. One might condone the former sentiment, and pity the latter. Yet, it is something to see a great people doing penance through the centuries for the crime of their forefathers. It is the old story of aggression and hate triumphant for the moment; and then the Nemesis unsated, eternally dogging their footsteps. For this is the one supreme consolation—that injustice, no matter how powerful and supreme, has ever but a temporary and a transient triumph; and that sooner or later the Fate comes hurrying on, veiled from head to foot, and stands silent by the side of the individual or the nation, never to be exorcised, never to be propitiated, until it has wrung out the last drop of retribution appointed by the unseen tribunal that judges the unit and the race. What would not the Florentines give to-day to erase two pages from their history—the flame-scorched page of the holocaust of their monk, and the letter of expatriation, which drove their poet to exile and death!

The Worker in Iron

Some fifty years after the great Florentine's death, there lived in an obscure street in Ravenna one of those artists in iron and brass, of which the towns in Italy then were full. You may see their handiwork still in cathedral gates, in the iron fretwork around a shrine, in the gratings around the Sacramental altars in episcopal churches; and if you have not seen them, and entertain any lingering doubts, look up your Ruskin, and he will make you ashamed. These were the days when men worked slowly and devoutly, conscious that work was prayer, and that they were laboring for the centuries, and not for mere passing bread. We cannot do it now, for we toil in the workshops of Mammon; and neither *fames,* nor fame, can give the inspiration of that mother of art, called faith. Well, this artist's name was Jacopo Secconi; and he had an only child, a daughter, whose name was Beatrice, called after the great poet who had made his last home at Ravenna. The old man, for he was now old, never tired of speaking to his child of the great exile; and Bice never tired of questioning her father about Beatrice, and the wonders of Purgatory and Heaven. Once a month, however, a dark shadow would fall upon their threshold; a brother of Jacopo's, from Florence, who would come over to see his niece, for he loved her; but she did not love him. For, after the midday meal, the conversation of the two brothers invariably turned upon Dante and Florence, and Dante and Ravenna. No matter how it commenced, it veered steadily around to the everlasting topic, and on that they held directly contradictory views.

A Brothers' Quarrel

The Florentine stoutly maintained that Dante was in Hell, and eternally damned.

"You say here," he would say, pointing his long finger, and sweeping the whole of Ravenna in a circle, "*Eccovi l'uomo che stato all' Inferno!* I say: *Eccovi l'uomo che sta all' Inferno!*"

"*Corpo di Bacco!*" the brother would exclaim, "you deserve to go thither yourself for such a saying. God couldn't send such a man to Hell. He could not give such a triumph to Satan!"

"Dante hath sent priests and bishops and cardinals there," the brother would reply. "He hath filled its gloomy caverns with his enemies. He was vengeful and unforgiving. There is no place for such in Heaven!"

"I saw him here in exile," replied Jacopo, "when you, good Florentines, drove him out. I saw him walking our streets, a grave, solitary man. My father used point him out, and say: 'Look well, Jacopone, look well! That's a face that men will worship to the end of time!' "

"A bad, gloomy face, full of sourness and malice to God and man," the Florentine would reply.

"Presence of the Devil! No, no, no!" cried Jacopo. "But a great, solemn, marble face, chiselled as with a point of fire. I mind it well. He used to pass our door, always looking forward and upward, his cloak slung around him, and the folded beret on his head. Men used to kneel down and kiss the pavement where he trod. God sent his angels and his Beatrice for him when he died."

Bice

"Pah!" would exclaim his brother. "That's a pious deceit. There are only ten commandments, brother mine; and one of these, the greatest: 'Thou shalt love!' Believe me, your Dante has read the *Lasciate* more than once since he died!"

"Then where could God put him?" shouted Jacopo. "Did he create another circle for him lower down? No! no! God does not damn such souls as Dante's! I allow you he may be in Purgatory for a short time, because we must all go thither for our sins and imperfections. But Dante damned! All Heaven would cry out against it!"

So the controversy would rage, month after month, and Bice would listen with wondering, tearful eyes. But she hated her uncle cordially, and would refuse to kiss him when he went away. And for days Jacopo would not be the same; but he swung to his work in a moody, silent, abstracted way, and sometimes he would pause, and wipe the sweat from his brow, and say to himself:

"Dante in Hell! Yes, he was! We all know that; but he is not. I swear it. He is not!"

And he would bring down his hammer furiously upon the iron; and Bice, cooking the midday meal, would tremble and cry.

Prayers for the Dead

But in the cool evening, when her work was done, and father had had his supper, and was poring over the great black-letter pages of his great poet, Bice would steal down to the little church just around the corner, and pray long and earnestly. For she was a sweet, innocent child, and loved all things, but most of all God, as the Supreme Beauty. Then she prayed for the soul of her good mother, who was dead; and lastly, she knelt before a favorite Madonna, and, remembering her father's words, she prayed long and earnestly for the dead poet.

"Abandoned and rejected in life," she said, "like all great souls, he must not be neglected in death. God may hear the prayers of a child for the mightiest soul He has made for centuries."

And she always prayed in the poet's own words, for they were as familiar as her *Pater Noster,* or *Ave Maria,* as no evening ever went by but she had to repeat one of the great cantos for her father. And she used to pray:

Vergine madre, figlia, del tuo figlio,
Umile ed alta più che creatura,
Termine fisso d'eterno consiglio.
La tua benignità non pur soccorre
A chi domanda, ma molte fiate
Liberamente al domandar precorre.
In te misericordia, in te pietate,
In te magnificenza, in te s'aduna
Quantumque in creatura è di bontate.
Or questi, che dall' infima lacuna
Dell' universo infin qui ha vedute
Le vite spiritali ad una ad una,
Supplica a te, per grazia di virtute
Tanto che possa con gli occhi levarsi
Più alto verso l'ultima salute;
Ed io, che mai per mio veder non arsi
Più ch'io fo per lo suo, tutti i miei preghi
Ti porgo, e prego, che non sieno scarsi;
Perchè tu ogni nube gli disleghi
Di sua mortalità, coi preghi tuoi
Si che il sommo piacer gli si dispieghi.

Bice's Dream

Then, one soft summer evening, she fell asleep on the altar steps immediately after her prayers; and she had a dream. She saw a great sea in the dawn-light, just waking up in the morning breeze, and fluted in long, gentle plaits, that caught the pink light from the burning East. And lo! across the waters came a tiny boat, propelled neither by sail nor oar; and standing in the prow was a Soul,—the Soul of a Woman, resplendent as the sun, and glowing in its crystal transparency, for Bice saw the Morning Star through her vesture, as it lay low down in the horizon. And the boat and the Soul came towards the sleeping child, until the latter beckoned and said:

"Come hither, O Child of Mercy, and enter with me. I have come for thee!"

And Bice said: "Who art thou?"

And the Soul answered: "I am the spirit of Beatrice. I have been sent for thee."

And Bice answered: "I cannot go, for my father is old and feeble, and I may not leave him."

And the Soul said: "It is imperative that thou come; for thou alone holdest the keys of that place, where he, whom we love, is detained."

Purgatory

And Bice entered; and they passed out over the shining waters that trembled beneath them, until they came to a shore, horrid with beetling crags, which seemed to touch the sky, and beneath whose feet the sea swelled and made no sound. And they rode on the waves to the mouth of a gloomy cavern, vast and impenetrable, for the front was closed by a great iron gate, whose bars seemed red with fire, or the rust of eternity. And behind the bars was the figure of the great poet, wrapped in his gloomy mantle as of old, and looking out over the shining sea with that same look of settled gloom and despair which Bice knew so well. And the Soul said:

"Go forward, and open the gate, and liberate our Beloved!"

But Bice wept, and said: "Alas! How can I? I am but a child, and the gate is heavy, and the task is grievous!"

The Two Keys: Charity and Prayer

But the Soul said: "Loose the keys at thy girdle, and go forward!"

And Bice found two keys at her cincture, and she loosed them. And one was marked "Charity," and it was of gold; and the other was of silver, and the word "Prayer" was stamped thereon. And going forward she fitted the former into the great rusty lock. The bolt shot backwards, but the gate would not yield. Then she fitted the silver key, and lo! the great iron barrier swung back heavily. And entering, the child caught the poet's hand, and drew him forth. And the gate swung back with horrid clangor. And, entering the boat, the three sped forward rapidly towards the dawn, which is infinity, which is Heaven. And the poet, placing his hand on the child's head, said sweetly and solemnly:

"Thrice blessed art thou, thou second Beatrice; for lo! what my Beatrice accomplished but in vision, thou hast verily wrought!"

. . . . . .

"How now? how now? giovanetta mia!" said the aged sacristan, as he rattled his keys above the sleeping child. "What a strange couch hast thou chosen! But sleep comes lightly to the young. *Surge! filia! benedicamus Domino!*" he shouted.

He bent low and raised the face of the sleeping child.

"Jesu! Maria! but she is dead!"

Schelling's Three Religions

Even a philosopher cannot resist the temptation to sacrifice truth to an epigram. Even the mystical Schelling, perhaps because he was so mystical, could not resist the temptation. The reign of dogma, he says, that is, the religion of St. Peter, lasted up to the period of the German Reformation; the reign of grace, the religion of St. Paul, has continued from that time until now. Both are now superseded, and the time has come for the reign of Love, the religion of St. John. The first two clauses of the epigram are absurd and untrue. We wish we could say the reverse of the last; but the time has not come. And, alas! the three clauses of the proposition are mutually contradictory and, therefore, unacceptable. If it were true that dogma had disappeared (the hope of all modern agnosticism), charity should disappear with it; for all charity is founded on dogma—the sublime one that charity is charity, because God has ordained it amongst men, as a reflection of His own perfection. So, too, if grace disappeared, charity would likewise vanish; for it is not by Nature, which is rapine, we love; but by grace, which compels Nature into its own sweet ways, and files its teeth and claws. But it will be a great day for Humanity, when from pole to pole, and from zone to zone, the great brotherhood, and not the common brutehood of the race is proclaimed; and all the world's weapons of war are piled at the foot of the Cross, never again to be assumed for aggression or defence; for the former will be unknown and the latter unnecessary.

The Millennium of Love

All the world's great thinkers have been dreaming of this millennium of love. Philosophers have defined what it shall be. Its foundation, its internal economy, its laws and institutions, its administration and executive—they have arranged all, there in their studies and laboratories. Every ethical system framed by great thinkers, from Aristotle to Spinoza, from Spinoza to Herbert Spencer, is constructed with a view to the establishment of this Republic of Mankind. Poets dream of it, limn all its beautiful features, chant its triumphs. Shelly visioned it as built upon cloud foundations, with walls of jasper, and ceilings of sapphire, and floors of chalcedony. Tennyson dreamed it more prosaically:

"When the war-drums throb no longer and the battle-flags are furled
In the Parliament of men, the Federation of the World."

Political economists strain their eyes towards the fair vision, and every theory, Malthusian and other, is directed towards its final fulfilment. Philanthropists and Christian Socialists build this commonwealth in miniature; and "Brook Farms" and Mormon settlements are the temporary embodiments of this idea that is haunting humanity. Meanwhile the world wags on as usual. There is the same inequality in life's conditions, the same chasm between the rich and the poor, only ever deepening and ever widening in the process of the suns; the same poverty and squalor, the same disease and crime. And the battle-drums are rolling, and the rifles are barking as of yore. But the battle-flags are furled, not in the sleep of peace; but the all-grasping belligerent races, whilst coveting everything, have grown economical—in silk and honor!

The Solution: Self-Sacrifice

And yet the solution of the problem, the realization of the dream, lie beneath men's hands, if men's eyes could only see them. But, as a sick man will have recourse to every kind of quackery, but refuse legitimate and certain remedies, so this civilization of ours, sick unto death, swallows every nostrum of charlatanry, and rejects the one infallible remedy. That remedy could never have been discovered by men. It is the revelation of God. It lies in the voluntary sacrifice of the individual for the sake of the community; in the sacrifice of the class for the welfare of a nation; in the sacrifice of the nation for the benefit of a race; in the sacrifice of a race for the welfare of mankind. But so long as the individual is self-seeking, and the nations strain for self-aggrandizement; and man's life is not a labor according to the primal curse, which is its eternal blessing, but a warfare, with the victory to the strongest; so long will the evolution of the race go forward, not towards final perfection, evolution from the survival of the fittest, but towards final destruction with the elimination of all that is sweetest and most beautiful. And yet, in its fiercest and most aggressive spirit, the world would hardly choose to go back to Beresarks and Vikings, to Alarics and Attilas! Yet, thitherwards most surely it is tending, in that neo-heathenism which sings the soft hymns of Christianity whilst pursuing its pagan career of conquest and aggression.

Power and Humility

But here comes in the complex question: Can the really humble rule? And must there not be the pride of strength in those who are called to govern? The question concerns individuals, limited communities, whole nations. Is humility, self-effacement, a qualification for the father of a family, the superior of a religious house, the captain of a great army, the premier of a world-ruling parliament? If it is, there seems to be no power of ruling which means the enforcement of one's own will on the will of others. A family, a community, a commonwealth, without a strong, self-reliant hand to guide it, lapses into anarchy. On the other hand, how can humility consist with the absolute exercise of unlimited power? The problem may be put in other terms. We have seen how the world, and our lower nature, worship strength, even brute strength. We all admire the famous Abbot Sampson, who reduced an unruly community to order, defied a king, insisted on the rights of his order, braved force from without and rebellion from within. In our own days, the same hand that canonized Abbot Sampson deified Oliver Cromwell. Yet, if ever there was a brute, it was this latter adventurer. Say what we like, the vast majority of mankind worship brute force. "We like a strong man," is the cry of every one. But it is the cry of a low nature, still akin to the brute and the serpent; or it is the norm and standard demand of an advanced and perfected civilization.

Characters in Dickens

On the other hand, gentle, refined natures love simple and lowly lives, and humble and pleading actions. That sentence in the "Sentimental Journey," in which Sterne depicts his own feelings, when the shamed Franciscan monk turned away and looked down at his brown, threadbare sleeve, finds a responsive echo in all human hearts. The characters in the novels of that great dramatist, Dickens, which appeal most to our sympathy and love, are such humble beings as Tom Pinch, and Little Nell, and Little Dorrit, and Florence Dombey, and Peggotty, etc. Ah, yes; but that is fiction. Precisely. But if we met these gentle, pleading beings in real life, would we feel similarly towards them? Yes, if we were like them, not otherwise. If we were simple, and lowly, and gentle, we would love them in flesh and blood, as well as we love their spectral forms in literature. But if we were base and ignoble, if we worshipped strength and distinction, we would despise them heartily as beneath us. Why? Because, in the solitude of our rooms we have no eye of public opinion upon us to rebuke us for our weakness in loving the weak. But, with the Argus eyes of society upon us, it would be a grave test of our integrity to walk a crowded street with the ragged companion of our school-days; or to stand up in a heated ball-room with the homely rustic, and face a hundred eyes of criticism and contempt.

The Strength of Humility

But the really humble can rule, and can rule with firmness and success, if unaggressive. There is a world of difference between strength and aggression, between power and the pride of power. It is the sheathed strength, that underlies all real humility, which we worship. And it will invariably be found that those meek, yielding characters, who never assert themselves, who willing efface themselves, exhibit the fortitude of endurance and the swiftness of strong resource, when in crises of life and death, great personal or state emergencies, such qualities of mind and soul are demanded by the exigencies of the weak, or the panic of the pretentious and the boastful. And, if raised to power by the suffrages of subjects, or the command of some higher authority, they invariably develop unsuspected resources of spiritual strength and agility; whilst their sense of humility and self-nothingness prevents them from infringing on the rights of the weak. They can be imperative without being aggressive. They can guide without hurting. They can stretch forth the shepherd's crook and lead into line the vagrant and the self-willed without plucking one wisp of wool or forcing one pitiful bleat. And they are content to govern and guide their own without throwing covetous eyes on alien property; or seeking in some reflex axiom, which is generally an unacknowledged sophism, an excuse for conquest or aggression.

The Omnipotence of Christ

Indeed, if we look close, we shall find that it is the Omnipotence of Christ, even more than His Mercy, that enchained the multitude and kept close to Him His most capricious disciples. "Show us a sign," was the cry of the curious and selfish mob. If our Lord had merely preached, He would have left no converts. If He had wrought miracles without having preached, He would have bequeathed to us no Gospel. It is His power that prevails. "He hath done all things well." It is His positive, dogmatic, assertive teaching that convinces. "Surely man never spake like this Man." The multitude wondered and worshipped. The chosen ones worshipped and loved. And we, in the far-off times, we, too, are entrained amongst His worshippers and lovers, because we feel that here is Omnipotence; and that when all things else are as fragile as a broken reed, we can fall back upon and lean our weakness on the unyielding strength of Jesus Christ. And this awful commanding power was so unaggressive. He smote no one—He coveted nothing. "Put up thy sword." It is the Meek and Lowly One, who holds in leash the elements of invincible might, that commands that instinct of admiration, which as well as pity is the first condition of love.

Quousque?

And yet, while we wonder at and worship His invincible power, it is the consciousness of its possession, rather than its arbitrary exercise, that demands our admiration. It is the reticence in speech, and the restraint in action, that we adore. And this exquisite self-balancing, this absence of all passion, the submission to calmness and reason, under the greatest provocation, were manifested towards His brethren more conspicuously than towards His Jewish enemies.

I know nothing more pathetic than that sentence of the Evangelist: "He rebuked their incredulity." When? Just as He was about to ascend into Heaven. Incredulity at such a moment, and after such experience!

Alas! yes. They had seen Him put forth proof after proof of His Divinity in His many and marvellous miracles; they had seen the wonder of His Death, and the splendors of His Resurrection; they had marvelled at His divine equanimity, and it is not difficult to imagine their looks of bewildered admiration, curiosity, and doubt, as they saw to-day proofs of his Godhead, and to-morrow evidences of His Manhood; He had appeared to them again and again after His Resurrection, spoken to them, eaten with them, to prove He was no spirit. And yet, weak and incredulous to the last moment, they stared at Him, there on the hillside of Olivet, with mute, blank, unintelligent wonder, until He was obliged to repeat that old formula of His pity and sorrow, *"O stulti et tardi corde! Quousque! Quousque?"* He rebuked their incredulity; and then—a cloud hid Him from their sight.

Conquests of Christianity

Paganism conquered by aggression. Christianity conquers by submission, and her victories are more lasting. Attila and Leo; Gregory and Henry; Napoleon and Pius VII; Bismarck and Pius IX. What mighty duellists they were; and how the feeble priests, in the end, by the might that is from above, prevailed over the mail-clad warriors, with their legions behind them. Yes! the end is always certain; victory is to the just. But what almost infinite patience is required to watch for that end, and to be satisfied with the fruition of victory! For one naturally argues: Can victory give back all that we have lost by being unjustly assailed? Can it recompense us for the weary suspense, the sleepless anxiety, the bruised feelings, the ignominy, the shame, the sorrow? And, on the other hand, will a mere black mark in the judgment-roll of History be accounted sufficient retribution for pride, injustice, and aggression? Doth not the whole man arise in protest against wrong? And is there not something fiercer in the human heart in its revolt against injustice than the plaintive wail of the exiled Pontiff: "I have loved justice, and hated iniquity; therefore I die in exile"?

To Understand is to Forgive

Human nature is unchangeable; and to-day there are few who have been in contact with men, that do not suffer an almost irresistible temptation to despise them. The law of rapine, which is self, so predominates amongst them; their little souls are held in leash by so fragile a tenement; their time is so short; and they play their wretched little parts so badly, that one is tempted to hiss the whole company from the stage forever. Human history is but a record of human weakness and brutality. The Cross has been planted in the Coliseum; but the evil spirits that lashed with lust and fury the sixty thousand spectators, who seemed to drink with their eyes the blood of their victims, have sought better-swept and cleaner places. But they are by no means exorcised or banished from the earth. Let the battlefields of the world, the cries of the oppressed, paeans of the victors, the broken hearts, the wrecked lives, testify to it. What then? Are we to grow impatient with these little minnies? Are we to dream of a greater and stronger and more spiritual race than we behold on our planet? Perhaps so! Yet it would be better to restrain our judgments, and imitate "the soft yearnings of infinite pity," conscious that the key to the mystery of so much meanness and so much weakness is somewhere. "Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner!"

The Intellectually Throned

There was some meaning, then, in that half-comical remark of his cheerful friend to the melancholy Johnson: "You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson. I have tried, too, in my time, to be a philosopher; but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in." That's just it! Cheerfulness and philosophy won't go hand in hand. The moment you think, you begin to sink; just as a swimmer afloat on the surface of the water has to struggle to save himself from sinking, if he attempts to draw the least breath. "The weight and burden of all this unintelligible world" is too much for us. We can only bear it by not thinking of it. Just as physical agony is not only tolerable, but actually forgotten, the moment the mind is abstracted by sleep, or greater absorption, or an anæsthetic; so, if life is to be happy and pleasurable, we must cease to view it too closely, or to watch too minutely the ticking away of time, or the varied pulsations of everyday experience. Of course, there is a class set apart for these things—those "intellectually throned"; they *must* suffer, but probably they have their reward. For ordinary mortals, it is wisest to face the little drama of each day with hopeful hearts, perform its duties, enjoy its pleasures, suffer its trials; and place the sum-total at the feet of Him who is the dramatic Censor of all the alternate tragedy and comedy into which life is divided.

The Pain of High-Thinking

It has been said, too, that the reading of a great book has a tendency to make the reader gloomy and despondent. Probably it puts so high an ideal before him that he becomes quite discontented with the humdrum existence around him, and passes gradually from a first feeling of discontent to one of self-contempt, and a grave undervaluing of all that he had esteemed in others. It is a grave disturbance of homely, happy thoughts and customs that were pursued with a certain feeling of satisfaction that there was no obligation to reach higher. There is, of course, a certain exhilaration in feeling that we have seized on higher possibilities, and lighted ourselves to a higher plane. But then we bid good-bye to the pleasant valleys beneath us, where in humble associations and with very commonplace views of life we had managed to jog along pleasantly through the greater part of life. Here, too, are there compensation and loss, the eternal interchange between the positive and negative forces of life. For high thought we have to sacrifice lowly pleasures; for exaltation of mind we have to yield up content; and whether the exchange is to our profit we shall never determine. But we must go on; there is no halting, unless we wish to be crushed or pushed aside, or be faithless to our vocation.

A Big Blaze

We had a big fire, last night. Something mysterious woke me up from a deep sleep just as the clock was chiming midnight. It was some time before I could gather my thoughts together. Then I noticed a curious light, palpitating against the blind of my northern window. I thought it was the moon, but instantly remembered that the moon never appears in the northern horizon, and that the moon shines steadily, and not with this pulsating light. I rose up, and raised the blind. Across the river, and not two hundred yards away, the mill, a vast building, six stories high, built as a flour mill, years before American competition drove Irish flour even from Irish markets, was on fire. Every coign and crevice was caught in the flames, which leaped through its seventy windows and reared themselves thirty feet above the roof. I could feel the heat in my bedroom, but could not hear a sound. The wind blew from the east, and carried the roar of the conflagration far out to the west, and over the river and beyond the trees. Not a soul was stirring, although the single street was lighted as if by a hundred electric arcs. The very dogs, which never cease barking on ordinary nights, were silent. I was anxious for my stables, and when I found these were safe, I roused the village. It was no easy task. They slept the sleep of innocence and exhaustion. Then they grew alarmed, and no wonder, for half the village is thatched, and nothing could have saved it if the wind blew from the north or west.

The Flowers at Night

As it was, there was but one building imperilled, and that was the Convent, which lay right in the track of the burning debris that was flung high in the air from the seething cauldron beneath, and was then caught by the wind, and carried hundreds of yards in a westerly direction. We could see great flakes of fire falling on the Convent roofs, and lodging in the branches of the trees around. It seemed only a matter of minutes before the whole building would be wrapped in fire and smoke. There were plenty of willing hands to help, however; and, although they had to dodge the burning flakes of slate and timber that fell noiselessly upon the grass, they soon extinguished the burning fragments on roof and trees; and, in a few minutes, all danger was over. I returned home; and, as there was no possibility of sleep with such a conflagration lighting up the heavens and the earth, I went up into my garden, and sat down, and watched the flowers under that light I should probably never see again.

In the Spring Dawn

There was no color, but a kind of soft brown atmosphere over all. This was the reflection flung downwards from the heavy clouds overhead, which now were reddened as in a winter sunset, when the light falls lurid and glaring; and the angry sky forebodes stormy weather. The shadows were deep and black; but, in the open this strange color hung down over all the garden-beds and tinted hyacinth, tulip, and daffodil in the same monastic and uniform tints. Then, early in that spring morning, I noticed for the first time the meekness of the flowers. It had never struck me before. Now, they looked like little children awakened from sleep under a sudden terror; and they seemed so helpless, so gentle, there whilst the horrors of the conflagration were round about them, and the roar and the flame were startling all the darkness of the night. I remained there till the faint Spring dawn lit up the eastern sky, and in a few moments dulled and almost extinguished the splendors of the furnace that had now become a well of redhot metals and stones. Presently, the sun arose; and all the flowers began to turn their gentle and wistful faces towards him. It was as the face of a mother bending over the cradle of children awakened in terror of the night.

The Meekness of Flowers

I have often studied that curious aspect of gentleness and meekness in flowers of which I have made mention before. Here, and here alone, is the lie given direct to the poet:

For Nature is one with rapine.

Whatever be said of bird, beast, fish, or insect, of which it may perhaps be true that they subsist by plunder and violence, here is the great exception. A little water and a little air, and behold! they perfrom their part in the universe of things; and not an unimportant part, if beauty and fragrance are essential ends in that great evolution that works upwards from the clod to the star. And not only are they unaggressive, but they are infinitely forbearing and long-suffering. Sky and earth and air combine against them; and they suffer all meekly. The angry and wanton winds toss them to and fro; the fierce whips of the rain lash them, till they droop their meek heads, and weep like chidden children; the teeming earth sends up its little parasites, that heedless of beauty nestle beneath the loveliest leaf or stamen, and consume its vitality. There is no defence and no protest. It is as if an acid were flung on a panel by Angelico; or a Murillo exposed to sun and rain.

But no angry remonstrance arises from Man or Nature. The great mother is so prolific of her beauties, that no one heeds the prodigality and waste.

Upas Leaves

It is true indeed that there are carnivorous plants beneath the tropics; and upas-leaves of death beneath which the tiny animal creation, so destructive of flowers in temperate climates, suffer retributive justice from their victims. But then, everything is made fierce by that terrible tropical sun; and the meekest things forego their natural inclinations beneath his maddening influences. It is also true, I am told by experts, that the most gentle-seeming flowers exhale a poisonous, miasmatic breath, so that their sisters droop beneath their aromatic, but treacherous breathing. But these are exceptions, proving that the fairest things may be the most deadly; and that, as we so often read in the histories of men, death may lurk in the vintage of the Apennines, sparkling through Venetian crystal. But I only speak of what I know, and that is that flowers are the fairest and gentlest things the Hand of God hath fashioned from His elements of Nature; and one would almost hope they had souls to be reborn forever in the sunlit valleys of Paradise.

The Beauty of Fire

One thing also I never realized before,—and that was the terrific beauty and loveliness of fire. Dealing with it in ordinary life, it is, I suppose, too much of a slave to us to command our admiration. It is only when it starts up and assumes the mastership, that we recognize its majestic, if destructive power. It is as if a company of galley-slaves broke their bounds, and carried ruin and terror all along before them; then fell down lifeless under the ruin they had made. But it is a mighty element—all the more to be dreaded, because it is latent, yet operative everywhere—nay, it is the great central energy which everywhere works through space. That blue jet of flame in my grate is lighted by the sun; and it is diluted but real sun-force that lights this paper which I am just now darkening. The same mysterious power has bleached the linen in my sleeve, and browned the cuticle of my hand. It has cooked that meat before me, and enamelled the plate on which it lies. It built the temples of the gods in Persia, for itself was the deity worshipped; and in the Irish valleys it raised these dolmens and cromlechs that have withstood the storms of three thousand years.

Siris

But if you would like to trace this mighty element, not on the earth, where its footsteps are so deeply impressed; but even in the Heaven of Heavens, and through even immaterial things, such as human thought and the soul of man, up through the tortuous paths of philosophy, and even to the throne of the Eternal, read that wonderful treatise of Bishop Berkeley's, which he quaintly calls *Siris*. Here he takes you from the exudations of the pine-tree to their latent energies; from these to their source, the Sun; thence to Light and Fire, real and symbolical; thence to first principles of Being, to first objects of worship; thence to Chaldæan religions and Persian fire-temples; or through Platonism to the Hebrew Prophecies and Psalms, where fire has always figured largely as symbol, as vesture, as metaphor; thence, again, through Pagan adumbrations of the Trinity up to the great central mystery of Creation, until in the highest altitudes of thought, he suddenly remembers its origin, and goes back to the homely virtues of tar-water.

Berkeley and Malebranche

Is there a more pathetic scene in literary biography than that which took place between Berkeley and Malebranche in the cell of the Oratorian in Paris? The fine old priest, with his wonderful ideas about God, bending over the pipkin on the fire that held the decoction that was to cure the inflammation of the lungs from which he was suffering; and the grave English philosopher, with his new idealism occupying every cranny and nook of his brain! Malebranche could not accept such visionary notions as an explanation of the mystery of Being; and argued, reasoned, expostulated, whilst he stirred the medicine in the pipkin. His Gallic impetuosity was too much for him. Inflamed lungs will not stand much pressure even from philosophy. The phlegmatic Englishman hied him homeward to his country; the Oratorian was dead in a few days, martyred by his devotion to what he deemed truth.

Recreations

Talking of this beneficent, and symbolical, and dread element, I came across a curious expression a few days ago. On turning over the leaves of certain autobiographies of famous persons, I saw that one of them gave, under the head of "Recreations," the following:

"Variation of occupation, *playing with fire,*" etc. How did he amuse himself playing with fire? Did he swallows live-hot coals, like a stage-conjuror, or put a lighted candle in his mouth, as we all did when we were boys, or was he an amateur pyrotechnist, amusing himself in his back-garden on winter nights, and delighting all the small boys in his neighborhood? I suspect there was a little affectation in this "playing with fire," as indeed there is in most autobiographies. I remember how affected I used to be by Carlyle's letters to his wife, until I found she accused him of writing all these affectionate epistles with a view to their future publication, and for the edification of posterity. But I came across one little note, which was thoroughly naïve and genuine; and another which was pathetic. The former was written by a lady-authoress; and a very distinguished one. Under the head of "Recreations," she mentions three things: Reading, writing and—talking! God bless her! There's no nonsense there! No "archæological explorations," "Alpine climbing," "deciphering Assyrian inscriptions;" but "talking," a plain, honest avowal of a harmless amusement.

Tea-Table Talk

I would give a good deal to be one of the circle around the tea-table of that lady, some winter night, when the wind was threatening the final cataclysm on all things outside, and the merry blazes were dancing up the chimney—you know the rest! The ghost of Dickens rises up before me, with a raised forefinger. "I have said all that a thousand times better than you." God bless you, Charles! So you have; and made us all your debtors forever! But let us suppose a Dickens' picture, and that good lady presiding; and let us suppose that she has done the honors, and is now free—to talk. I can imagine myself listening in the shade of a great lamp, or under the shelter of a Grand piano—listening, listening, whilst the stream of calm, graceful eloquence rolled smoothly from that lady's lips. And, if I am to judge by her written language, it is no idle gossip either; but gentle, liberal views on things and places and persons, that are very interesting; of strange scenes she has visited abroad, of distinguished persons she has met, of rare intellectual tournaments between the giants of intellect of our own day; and not a word to wound charity. For, where Intellect rules, Charity is always inviolate.

In Former Days

The pathos in these brief autobiographies came in thus:

"*Recreations: In former days,* golfing and tennis, cycling and swimming."—Alas! my poor friend, going down the slope of life, thou must now take things gently. Thou hast no longer the elasticity of spirit, nor the suppleness of limb, nor that *élan,* which helped thee in youth to despise consequences and rush at the immediate. That twinge in thy shoulder reminds thee that tennis-bats and golf-mallets cannot now be swung with impunity; and a fall from a cycle, *in former days* to be laughed at as a trifle, might mean something serious now. In fact, friend, thou hast passed under the ferule of that dread schoolmaster, experience; and his lessons there is no despising nor ignoring. Thou hast the heart of a boy, for I perceive there is a note of admiration, the admiration of regret, beneath that phrase *in former days;* but thou hast the mind of a man, tutored and experienced by many a rough accident in the uphill struggle of life; and thou art conquered! The splendid disdain of youth has vanished; thou hast learned to respect destiny; and thou hast become cautious, and let us hope modest withal.

Via Dolorosa

But is all this regrettable? Certainly not. The best part of life is unquestionably its decline, just as the mellow autumn is the fruit-bearer and peace harbinger of the year. I cannot for a moment envy these young athletes who sweep past my window here, flash across my vision for a moment and are gone. I feel glad of their courage, their splendid animal spirits, the exhilaration of youth and exercise, their enjoyment of the living present. But I do not envy them. I never go into a school-room without half wishing, like John Bright, to shed a tear over these young lives, with all the dread problems of life before them. Hence, too, I think we should pour into these young lives all the wine and oil of gladness we may, consistently with the discipline that will fit them for the future struggle. I cannot bear to see a child weeping. I almost feel, like Cardinal Manning, that "every tear shed by a child is a blood-stain on the earth." Yes! give them all the enjoyment they can hold. The struggle is before them. The ascending slope of life is a *Via Dolorosa*, a mounting of Calvary heights, if not an actual crucifixion. Want, despair, sin, sickness, disappointment, are waiting in the hidden caverns to leap out and waylay them. And many, how many? will fall by the wayside, and find in the arms of merciful death, the final relief from the struggle and burden of life.

The Evening of Life

Hence, undoubtedly, the evening of life is best. We have toilfully mounted the hillside; the setting sun is behind us, and soon we, too, shall go down into the great sea to awake again, we hope, in the dawn of a brighter morrow. Many of our comrades have fallen by the way; we regret them, we think gently and compassionately of them, but we cannot help just a little self-complacency in the reflection that we have emerged victorious on the summit of life, whilst so many have fainted by the way. We have realized at least, too, that the worries of life are mere incidents—the inevitable concomitants of an imperfect state of being; and we now make no more of them than of the wind-buffetings and the rain-drenchings that brought the color to our cheeks and sent the warm blood leaping through every capillary and nerve of our system. Yes! youth is the preparation for age; age is the fruition of youth. How well that kindly optimist, Robert Browning, knew it:

> Grow old along with me!
> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life, for which the first was made;
> Our times are in His hand,
> Who saith, "A whole I planned,
> Youth shows but half: trust God:
> See all; nor be afraid!"

The Earth Cure

And then, behind all and crowning all, there remains the Earth-Cure—the great solemn enfolding in the arms of Mother Nature of her weary and worn children. From her breast they sprang, little jets of organic life, and mounted higher and higher in the sun and light, making sweet sprays of pearls as the sunshine caught them and played with their crystal splendors; or, alas! perhaps, muddy and discolored from a too great mixture of clay. But, clear or turbid, they have touched their altitudes, and now break lower down and lower, until they are caught to the breast of Mother Nature again, and lost in her final embrace. And she is merciful, and knows nothing of her weak or wayward children. She folds them up with all their perverseness, and gently covers them all over, and is silent, till they pass into the charity of oblivion. But, meanwhile, she puts forth her tender grass and wild flowers above the most erring as well as the most faithful of her children; and allows her willows to weep downward, and her ubiquitous ivy to drape their headstones, as if even these were too loud-tongued for her wishes; and, as if in answer to the poor querulous desire of mortals to be remembered, she allows Time to pass his iron finger across their names, and whispers, "Be forgotten, be forgiven, and rest!"

Imploring Peace

But here Mother Church breaks with Mother Nature, and emphatically demands some perpetuation of Memory. She will not silence the pitiful pleadings from the tomb. All is *not* over. And all is not at rest as yet. The weary brain is stilled; no more troublous and restless thoughts flash across it. The limbs are at rest. No pains shall evermore rack them; no pleasure disturb them. But the spark of the Divinity which they imprisoned is still pursuing its way, through penal fires and across the dark airs of other worlds to its final resting-place whence it set out; and it seeks peace, peace and rest! Even the rather libertine fancies of Lord Byron were touched by the simple, Christian epitaphs in the cemetery at Ferrara:

Martini Luigi
Implora Pace,

Lucrezia Picini
Implora Eterna Quiete.

"The dead had had enough of life," he says, "and all they wanted was rest, and that they *implore!* There is all the helplessness, and humble hope, and deathlike prayer, that can arise from the grave—'implora pace.' I hope whoever will survive me, and shall see me put in the foreigners' burying-ground at the Lido, within the fortress by the Adriatic, will see these two words, and no more, put over me."

Similarity of Features

There is a curious similarity, not only between the thoughts that surge through the minds of men; but even between the physical features of many who, for good or ill, have left the impress of their presence on the world. There is a startling resemblance, for example, between the faces of two beings so utterly dissimilar as Voltaire and the Curé of Ars; between Rabelais and St. Benedict Joseph Labré; between Savonarola and George Eliot. How is it accounted for? Were both originally cast in the same physical and mental mould; then when the latter came to be acted upon by outer influences, it yielded to the pressure; and whilst the facial expression remained unchanged, as the flesh is less plastic than the spirit, the spiritual elements were shaped into the symmetry of the Saint or the distorted lineaments of an abortive or misshapen genius? Yet, the similarity is startling, although there is certainly in the face of the Saints a curious enamelling, a surface of sanctified beauty, that make the wrinkles beneath something far different from those that thought has indented on the face of the philosopher!

Benedict J. Labré

Benedict Joseph Labré! Saint? Yes. Canonized? Yes. The superb defiance flung by the great Empire Church in the face of modern Sybaritism! I confess to a certain sense of shrinking and squeamishness every time I stumbled across the words "crosus insectis," in the lessons of the Second Nocturne of his Office. I could not understand it. Is not cleanliness next to godliness? What about St. Bernard's: "I love poetry, but not dirt?" And St. Jerome? Were not all our dear Saints remarkable for this exquisite sense of corporal, as symbolical of internal, purity? And are not all our monastic, and conventual institutions, spotless and speckless, from attic to cellar? Would not a young postulant, in any of our nunneries, be promptly dismissed for the least symptoms of untidiness? And here is a beggar, a tramp, with just enough rags to cover him, but not to protect him, and these filthy in the extreme, raised on the altars of the Church for the veneration of the faithful! What about the Church keeping abreast of progress, and leavening civilization, when she defiantly canonizes this revolting pilgrim and vagrant, who repudiates every canon of sanitary science, and goes around, from shrine to shrine, with his rags and vermin, in the days of Russian and Turkish baths, massage, superfine *lingerie,* and vermicides, and insecticides *ad infinitum!*

A Study

It was as great and as interesting a problem as Free-will and Fore-knowledge, Ideas Innate or Acquired, or any other psychological question that might interest the ever inquisitive mind of man. I thought I should probe it to the end. I took up his life, written, *mirabile dictu!* by the superfine Anglican converts of the 'forties. It seemed to make matters infinitely worse. The habits of this Saint were simply appalling. He was a moving mass of vermin. He slept on dunghills. He ate the refuse of the poorest Italian cabins. He refused bread, and lived on cabbage stalks, orange-peel, and fragments of culinary refuse. Abominable! Loathsome! No, my curled and perfumed and unguented friend! Is there not something in Scripture about certain people that resemble platters, well cleaned on the outside, but very filthy within? And something about whited sepulchres? May it not happen also that this strange loathsome figure, externally defiled, may have a splendor and purity all his own; and that He who sees beneath the surface of things may discern sanctities beneath these grewsome surroundings, that would compel Him to send His angels from the high heavens to guard so resplendent a soul in so humble and defiled a tabernacle?

His Purity and Humility

Defiled? No. I retract that word. There was no defilement there. Nothing but the most exquisite and delicate purity of soul and body, so exquisite that it is almost certain this Saint never lost his baptismal innocence, and kept absolutely free during his short life from that particular ensoiling which is especially antagonistic to Christian holiness and sanctity. His humility was perfect. When fine ladies stood up from the altar rails and retired (we cannot blame them), when the Saint approached to receive Holy Communion, he bore the reproach with meek dignity, and besought the priest to communicate him apart from the congregation. He rejoiced that men shrank from him and loathed him. He sought humiliations as fools sought honors; he courted affronts, as men court flattery. Modest, mortified, chaste as an angel, mortified more than Anthony, more hidden than an Alexis, as meek as Francis de Sales, as seraphic as the angel of Assisi —how now the ethereal splendors of his beautiful soul shine through the tattered and broken integument of flesh and garments; and consecrate, as by some liturgical unction, the very things which seemed to the purely natural man an offense and a scandal to society!

A Saint

This poor beggar died. He was picked up from the streets, fainting, and carried to a neighboring house. He never recovered. He passed out of the visible world, and saw God! And then? And then, all Rome went wild about the dead Saint. There was a tumult in the Eternal City. Messenger boys ran wildly through the streets crying: The Saint is dead! The Saint is dead! Crowds thronged the chamber where he lay, with the beatitude of Heaven on his face. The fine ladies who had shrunk away as he passed and gathered up closely their perfumed silks, actually fought for one of those vile rags, which seemed so loathsome on the living frame; but were now converted by the magic of death, into precious relics to be kept in all their sordidness, and honored, both as souvenirs and talismans. The cry went forth demanding his canonization. Miracles are wrought by the dead body, as erstwhile by the living. He is beautified, and known as the Blessed Benedict Joseph for a century. And, finally, the great Pope, the reconciler of civilization and the Church, the writer of the great Encyclicals, and the sublime *Carmina*, the stately representative of all that is most cultured and refined in Catholicity, puts his final *imprimatur* on the pilgrim and the beggar, and confirms the verdict of the faithful by the official canonization of the Church. And this in the very teeth of the greatest of all the centuries!

The Desire for Contempt

What a strange, sublime, unhuman thing is that saintly desire for contempt! It is a reversal of all the processes and passions of men. Nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine human beings are consumed with the desire for honor, for human respect, for the esteem of their fellow-beings. The passion is universal and intense. The courage of the warrior, the ambition of the statesman, the vanity of the poet, the slavery to fashion, the delirium of love—all are created and stimulated by that one central desire—the esteem of men. And lo! here is one who, without affectation or hypocrisy, segregates himself from humanity, and places himself in the dust beneath the feet of men on the highways of the world. They take him at his word, trample on him, despise him, mock at him, leave him finally a mass of bruised compost; and then in the awful revelation of death they discern the Saint, the peculiar one, and they go on their knees, and lift up the bruised and mangled figure, and kiss the wounds they themselves have made, and almost dismember it in their passion for relics; and finally clamor to the great High-Priest at Rome to elevate that bruised figure on the altars of the Church, and to say that it was sacrosanct and holy. And, perhaps, under all this enthusiasm may be discerned that very vanity and self-seeking to which the life and death of the Saint were the keenest reproach.

Commanding Esteem

But often (it should be oftener), those meek, self-effacing spirits, who think the potsherds and dunghills too good for them, do command esteem even in this world. I can imagine with reverence and awe, the smitten monk, leaving his stall at a nod, and going up humbly to prostrate himself before the altar. I can imagine the Sister sharply chidden in Chapter, the hot blood mounting to the cheek and brow, but sternly ordered back by the voice of humility; and I can see the smile, genuine and unaffected, with which that hurt and grieved soul will immediately afterwards do some little kindly, humble office for the one that smote her. These are the things that bring us to our knees, and compel us to kiss the ground where saints have trod. And if we ourselves are yet unchastened, and would quiver beneath the rod, at least it is something to know that we can reverence in others what is wanting to ourselves. Thank God! no one yet, however antagonistic to the Church, has ever ventured to paint a sullen monk or an angry and disobedient nun. It is a negative tribute to the genuineness of Catholicity, as the religion of Christ.

The Judgments of Men

But what about the folly of the majority, who pursue this phantom; and even stretch their mouldering hands from the grave to grasp it. Brought to the test of reason, can there be anything so ridiculous as to seek the good opinion of fellow-mortals like ourselves? For, mark you, we seldom deceive ourselves as to our own insignificance. Whatever we appear or try to appear before the world, we cast a true, too true a reflection on the deep mirror of our own souls. And there we are not flattered. How do we measure *our* opinion of others. As a something not to be noted. Did we hear that a far-off author, or singer, or painter, was distressed by our poor opinion of him, it would make him simply ridiculous in our eyes, however flattering to our vanity it might be. And how does the judgment of others upon us differ from our judgment upon them? Not by a hair's breadth. But are quantities not to be taken into account by any sensible man? For, what am I, or you, or any one, to nine-tenths of those who have heard of us? A name—a certain collocation of a few letters, and no more. Of the I, or the THOU, they know nothing, or care less. A fall in stocks, a gray hair, an ill-fitting frock, is of far more consequence.

Serenity

Why then are we disturbed, elated, or depressed, by praise or contempt? Why, but because passion is more with us than reason, to say nothing of grace. Argue as we will, this human opinion weighs with us. It should not disturb the serenity of our thoughts even for an instant. Nay, even if one of those passionate, incontinent, undisciplined spirits should loom upon us out of his welcome invisibility, and say to our face what others speak against our mere name, how should it affect us? Clearly not at all! Let the creature carry his half-inarticulate, savage hate away with him into the darkness again! He has come like a shadow, and like a shadow he departs. Let his evil words pass with him. Let them haunt his soul, and not thine. Thus, too, we should allow that most uncouth being, the flatterer, to depart. Let the treacle stick to his soul, and not to thine. Ay, but can we? Yes! if we were all saints and philosophers. Aye! but if we were all saints and philosophers, would the wheels of the universe continue to revolve?

Evening in Great Cities

I think the city twilights are the most pathetic of all. The sinking yellow sun streaming along such great thoroughfares as Trafalgar Square and the Strand in London; or down along the Champs Elysées in Paris, and lingering on window, or column, or roof, has an aspect of extreme loneliness, emphasized by the little, twinkling eyes of star-jets or arcs, in café or restaurant, or even beneath the solemn trees. Man is summoned from labor to rest; and if one can pass by what he sees in the evening amusement of those "whose lines are cast in pleasant places," and watch the proletariat, the weary, bent, and broken masses of humanity, shuffling by with hod or mattock on shoulder, and probably envying the "elect of the earth" who sit within their gorgeous clubs or cosy corners in the fashionable restaurant; and then follow them further to their foul haunts in by-street or tenement house, and think of all the squalor and destitution and low mental and moral environments, one regrets that sunlight or twilight should pierce through and reveal the surroundings of toiling humanity; and would wish rather for the merciful darkness of winter that seems more in keeping with, and certainly covers more effectually, the sordid aspect which life turns towards her suffering and unhappy children.

An Island Prison

This thought broke suddenly upon me (nor can I remove the haunting fascination of it to this day), one summer evening very many years ago. It was not in a great city, but on a sunny island, "a summer isle of Eden," which, by some tasteless ingenuity, had been made a penal settlement. A mission was being conducted there by Regulars from the city; and we had been invited over to hear the convicts' confessions. It was pretty late when we finished, and on our way to dinner we had to pass through the dormitory or sleeping apartments of the prisoners. It was just five o'clock, and the summer sun was streaming across the bay, lighting up the headlands all around and the deep hulls of the ships, and casting great long shadows of buildings, and masts, and wooded promontories across the darkening sea. All was sunshine, and life, and sweetness without; all was darkness and desolation here. For we saw but strong cages, tier over tier, walls and partitions of corrugated iron, and a net of strong wire or iron in front of each cage, through which alone the little air, and the little light from the outer hall penetrated. Each cell was eight feet by four, and each, even at that early hour, on that sweet summer evening, had its human occupant. Some were in bed; others sat drearily on the wretched, wooden stool and stared like wild beasts at us. All were locked in. It was a human menagerie. I have often seen prisoners since then, even under worse circumstances. But, somehow, those wire cages haunted my imagination. And then we stepped, free and unembarrassed, and honored by the very warders, who held in their hands the keys of these human cages. The summer sun was oppressive in its heat and light. A pleasure steamer, well filled with all the fashion and style of a great city, panted by. A band was playing. No one gave a thought to the entombment of their fellow-mortals just a few yards away.

A Monastery

Some evenings later, I too, was locked in at a comparatively early hour in some such solemn twilight as I loved. It was at a Cistercian monastery. The bells had ceased their interminable tolling; the rumbling of the organ was hushed; the pattering of feet had ceased; the very birds, as if respecting the Trappist rule, were silent. I sat and looked out across the darkening twilight at the white statues glimmering against the deep background of pines and laurels. If there be any spot on earth where there is peace, and rest, surely it is here. Some day, a tired world will demand monasticism as a luxury, or necessity. But that was not my thought as I sat there, and put my hand on some such work of Catholic philosophy, as the *Imitation,* or the *Soliloquia* of St. Augustine. My thoughts swiftly reverted to the penal settlement on the "isle of Eden" and the cages, and their occupants. What an enormous gulf separated one condition from the other! There the one feeling uppermost was the degredation of humanity; here, you experienced its elevation. It was the nadir and zenith of the race. And yet, the conditions of life did not differ so much. Nay, so far as physical comfort or enjoyment, the prisoners are much better off than the monks. The latter rise earlier, have much coarser and more meagre fare, work harder, keep perpetual silence, sleep on harder couches, submit to greater humiliations. And yet, there is the whole width of the horizon of heaven between them. There you pitied, or compassionated; here you are reverent and envious. Despair seemed to hover over the prison; but it is the wings of angels that lift the fringes of the pines that sentinel the mountain abbey.

Aut Pati, Aut Mori

But there is something more curious even than this. I should not like to say that those poor, squalid prisoners would gladly exchange their lot with the monks. That is doubtful. But there can be no doubt that the monks, if called upon, would assume the garb and chains of the felon, and in the terrible transmutation experience only the greater joy. And the attraction would be, the very degradation and contempt and loss of caste and honor, which is the peculiar lot of the convict. Does the world deem this credible? Well, we have proofs. If saints seek contempt as ordinary mortals seek honors; if they have regarded themselves as the *peripsema* and offscouring of humanity; if they have begged to be laid on ashes in their dying moments; or that they may be privileged to die on dunghills, remote from all human observation; if a Vincent de Paul did go down to the galleys and suffer the cannon-ball to be riveted to his ankles, as you can see in that famous picture by Bonnat—why may not all this be repeated, when the spirit and teachings of Christianity are the same, and when from countless human hearts, made invincible by charity rises ever and ever that prayer of St. Teresa, "*Aut pati, aut mori?*"

The Immutability of Hope

I wonder is the secret to be discovered in that saying of Emerson's: "The hope of man resides in the private heart, and what it can achieve by translating that into sense. And that hope in our reasonable moments is always immense and refuses to be diminished by any deduction of experience." But that immutability of hope, my dear philosopher of Concord, demands the monk or the saint, or some such childlike and unspoiled temperament as thine own. The "deductions of experience" point all the other way. To keep one's heart unhardened until death is the achievement of a saint. Every stroke of the hammer of experience tends to anneal it. The two great impulses of nature, even in its lowest forms, are self-preservation and reproduction, and both demand the wisdom of the serpent more than the meekness of the dove. And these impulses are accentuated and intensified by experience. Every man stands solitary, with all other men's hands against him. He must fight for existence. Failure, defeat, is the one hell to be dreaded. Success is the supposed Elysium. Nay, all our modern systems of education tend thitherward. For what is all this terrible and complicated apparatus of education intended? What is the meaning of all this competition, rivalry, gaining of prizes, etc.? What but the preparation for the greater struggle? And struggle means rivalry; and rivalry, enmity. "One alone can attain supremacy." And that one must be thou, and no other. How are the best feelings of the heart translated into sense here?

Philanthropy

Nay, in such a struggle, where the watchword appears to be: "We neither ask, nor give quarter!" would not the uncontrolled impulses of the heart be the great traitors? Could there be any hope of success for a man who would be, above all things, generous, compassionate, self-sacrificing, kind? It is all right for you, my Crœsus-friend, whom I see labelled "multi-millionaire and philanthropist!" You can be lavish now, as much as you please. Nay, you must get rid of much of that glittering ballast, else it will sink your stately argosy. For gold is a weighty metal, you know; and you cannot steer well the ship of your fortunes so long as you have so much of a dead weight in the hold. But "philanthropist"? It is a pretty euphemism; and I don't want to quarrel with it. But I should have liked to know how you fared in the good ship Argo, as you set out in pursuit of the golden fleece. For I notice that Jason was very generous and considerate and pious to the gods, after his many adventures and trials. He built a splendid mausoleum to the island-king whom he accidentally killed; and sacrificed a sheep or two, after he, in concert with the amiable enchantress, Medea, had strewn the waters of the Euxine with the dismembered remains of the young Absyrtus.

A Collegium Christi

I will suggest something to you, "multi-millionaire and philanthropist," which may obviate such expiations by suspending the possibility of your errors, at least for a lustrum. What would you think of building and endowing a new species of educational institution, to be called the *Collegium Christi?* It will have for its motto: *S'effacer;* and "Bear ye one another's burdens" may be inscribed over the lecture-rostrums in the class-halls. It shall have all the latest appliances of science for the further conquest of Nature, and advancement of mankind. The extirpation of disease, the destruction of social evils, the bridging of the mighty gulf between rich and poor, the lifting up of fallen humanity, the study of criminology from the standpoint of Christ, the ventilation of grievances not as subjects for parliamentary eloquence, but as subjects to be grappled with, and destroyed and removed—these shall form the curriculum of studies. We shall by no means exclude even Pagan ideals. You may have busts of Crates and Cincinnatus, but not of Croesus; Minerva and Apollo may grace your corridors, but the long perspective must not be bounded by glittering *idola* of Mammon and Plutus. For the former are merely symbols, and alas! rarely pass beyond their symbolic state. But these latter are the dread divinities that haunt the steps of mankind from the cradle to the grave.

Masked Faces

But it is quite clear that to yield to heart impulses and generous emotions is to court failure in the struggle for existence, which has become with us synonymous with the struggle for wealth. Life is a masked ball, ending in success or failure. If you raise your domino, you might as well order your carriage, or droshky, or cab, and go home. You have revealed your identity, and the revelation is fatal. Unknown you might have moved safely amongst the unknown. But when everyone else knows you, whilst they remain unrevealed, what chance have you? You have lifted your visor in the tournament, and exposed yourself to deadly blows. Yes, get away from the tumult as quickly as you can; and, with the experience of so terrible a lesson, get away amongst the world's *anonymi*, and hide yourself. Or take some other mask, and wear it closely; and keep a close hand upon those traitorous, if generous emotions which are the fatal gifts of your heritage. It is all very melancholy; yet it is consoling to know that men still have hearts to feel, and if they must stifle their appeals, they cannot altogether still their beatings. And, now and again, secretly and with misgivings, they may yield to the luxury of fine, pure emotions without the danger of ultimate betrayal.

Unmasked

Hence, if you want to know what a man really is, watch him alone in the company of children. Here he can show himself as he is, because here he has nothing to fear and nothing to gain. Elsewhere, even in the society of his intimates and relations, he cannot reveal himself. Brother is a mystery to brother; and father to child. In the drawing-room, in the council chamber, in the club, in the easy undress of an after-dinner, one would suppose that men are off their guard, and wear their hearts on their sleeves. No! assuredly no! Wherever there is a something to dread, the petals of the soul close in, as the petals of flowers at the coming of night; and open reluctantly only when the light appears again. What a history of mankind in miniature is that little story of a certain Queen-Regent of France, who was down on her knees, groping around with hands and feet, playing Bo-peep with her little children in the nursery amidst shouts, and shrieking, and laughter. Suddenly the ambassador of a great state is announced. The mother stands suddenly erect, and is transformed into the Regent. Stately, and stiff, and ceremonious, she steels her face against even a smile. That must be impenetrable. The domino is suddenly pulled down. She speaks in riddles, and answers in enigmas. She watches every line of his face to read it; she heeds not his words. They mean nothing. So too with him. He is studying her eyes, her features. Both are playing a part; and both know it. They separate with mutual compliments and distrust. He goes back to his cabinet and mutters: "A clever woman!" She goes back to her nursery, and resumes her play with her children. Here is the whole world in miniature.

Progress

Pitiable! Yes, perhaps so! But, *que voulez-vous?* You have outgrown your childhood, and mankind has got out of its nursery and small clothes. You talk pitifully of the world's childhood, of its myths, and legends, and superstitions. You speak of its heroes as of great big children of generous hearts and narrow minds. Your twentieth-centuried scientist is painfully like the grandiose hero of Locksley Hall:

I to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains.

Yes! he has gone a step higher. He is illuminated. He has electric cars and railway murders. He has romantic novels and divorces. He has the Stock Exchange and suicides. We are moving at break-neck speed, and the wheel of existence revolves so rapidly but few gain the summit of the tire: the many are precipitated into the mire below. Inequalities between rich and poor yawn every day wider than the chaos between Dives and Lazarus. But on the wheel must go. He would be reputed a madman or, what is worse, an obscurantist, who, would cry: "Slow down, O wheel of life, and let the fallen arise! There is room for all, within you and around you! Slow down, or break into splintered wood and twisted iron in the end!"

Rest

Why doesn't all the world come to Ireland at least for the few days of quiet breathing and torpor which summer brings, and which even the most exacting Shylock of the modern world must allow? If I were a Croesus-philanthropist, such as I have already described, I would take from out all the factories and workshops of the world those pale mechanics, those anæmic and wasted women, and bring them here. I would take them from the stifling atmosphere where they breathe poison, and fill their lungs with the strong, clean salt air from the sea. For the rumble and thunder of machinery I would give them the ever soothing sounds of winds and waves. For the smell of oil and rags, and the odors of streets and slums, I would give them the intoxicating perfume of winds odorous from their march over purple heather and yellow broom, and the subtle scents that breathe from seaweeds washed with brine, and exhaling its sweetness and strength. And I would say to them: Here rest and forget! Plunge in these breakers, sleep on this heathy hillock; read, and pause, and think all day! The cares of life have no place here! They have "folded their tents like the Arabs." There is nothing over you here but the blue dome of Heaven, and the Eye of God looking through!

A Briton

The English have long ago discovered these nooks of paradise on the Irish coast. They have so completely monopolized one or two down there in the kingdom of Kerry that they feel quite resentful since the natives have found out those beauty spots, and are actually courageous enough to demand a right to share them. And here on this wild coast you will see a solitary Briton, a bewildered and almost panic-stricken mortal, pale-faced, thinly bearded, spectacled, with the field glass slung around his shoulders and something like an alpenstock in his hand. He looks rather fearfully around. He is outside civilization and he does not know what is going to happen. He is quite astonished at the temerity of these young gentlemen in white flannels, and these young ladies in tennis costume, swinging their bats gaily, as they mount the declivity towards the broad plateau above the sea. By and by, his nerves cool down; and if he can pick up courage enough to answer your kindly greetings, you will find him a bright, clear, intelligent soul. He is just come from the Bodleian, or the British Museum. The smell of books and mummies hangs around him. He, too, needs the sea!

Bronzed and Ruddy Irish

But all these bronzed and ruddy Irish, with health and life in every movement, feet that spring lightly from the turf, clean, ruddy bodies, as you see when they plunge from rock or spring-board and cut their way, like natives of the element, across the sea, what are they doing here? Taking their holidays? There are no holidays in Ireland; for every day is a holiday. We take the best out of life, and laugh at the world pursuing its phantoms across the weary wastes bleached with the bones of the unsuccessful and the fallen. We don't teach the philosophy of the schools well; but we practise the philosophy of life perfectly. So thinks, evidently, my statuesque Englishman, whose nerves are somewhat startled by our exuberant spirits. So think these German lads, who, amazed at Irish generosity, believe the donors of these innumerable sixpences, millionaires, although the donors may be as poor as themselves. So think these two lonely Italian brothers, who vend their pretty artistic paper-weights at fabulous prices. They are Garibaldians, if you please, brought up to believe that a government of priests is the worst in the world. They have been beaten into orthodoxy by the old Irish woman, who feeds them as if they were her own children, and thinks she has a right therefore to chastise their irreligion. But all carry back to their homes the idea that the Irish are the freest, gayest, most irresponsible people on the surface of the earth.

A Summer Evening

It is evening here. The sun has just gone down over there towards America, with all the pomp and splendor of cloud curtains and aerial tapestries; and the sea swings calm, acknowledging the prescriptive right of the vesperal-time to peace. The wealthy classes, who have just dined, the more modest people, who have just had tea, are all gathered pell-mell here before the handsome villas that crest the summit of these cliffs above the sea. Just here, inside the sea-wall, between two priests, sits an aged Archbishop, the weight of eighty winters bending his broad shoulders as he looks across the darkening bay and thinks of many things. Undeterred by rank or splendor, for there is a kind of glorious communion here, crowds of young lads and girls throng the sea-wall. A German band is playing Strauss and Waldteufel waltzes. But it is not dance music these Irish want. They demand the *Lieder* of the Fatherland. For every penny they give for a waltz, they will give sixpence for a German song. A young Bavarian, fair-haired, blue-eyed, will oblige them. And there, above the Atlantic surges, on this wild coast, the strange, sweet melodies, learned far away in some woodman's hut in the Black Forest, are entrancing Irish hearts, which understand not a single articulate guttural or labial of the foreigners, but feel the magic of the music stealing their senses away. And then the strangers reciprocate. And a hundred voices sing: *Come back to Erin, mavourneen, mavourneen!* to the accompaniment of violoncello and bassoon.

A Family Party

Passing along the corridor of my hotel that night on the way to my room I was accosted by a friend. After a few minutes' conversation he invited me to his room. Oysters and champagne? No. A game of nap? No. A whole family, three generations of them, were gathered into the father's bedroom. They were saying their night-prayers before separating for the night. The aged grandmother was reciting the first decade of the Rosary as we entered. We knelt. When she had finished the decade, she looked around and said: "Alice, go out!" Alice was a tiny tot of seven summers. Grandmamma promptly took up the recitation, repeated the form of the meditation, as found in Catholic prayer-books, and slowly and sweetly "gave out" the decade to the end. The grandmother looked around again and called out: "Go on, Willy!" Willy was the father, a gray-haired man of fifty-seven. To the mother's imagination he was but the child she carried in her arms half a century ago. Willy finished; and the aged mistress of ceremonies called out, now a grandchild, now the mother, until all were finished. Then the children kissed "good-night!" and departed. Across the yard, which is also garden,

> All night have the roses heard
> The flute, violin, bassoon;
> All night has the casement jessamine stirred
> To the dancers dancing in tune.

They kept me awake

> Till a silence fell with the waking bird
> And a hush with the setting moon.

Is This the Solution?

And this was the subject of my meditation the following morning, as I sat in my perch there above the sea. Here is the world's great secret solved. Here is the dream of the gentle mystic, Novalis, realized. Not that the scheme has yet rounded to absolute perfection here. The material and subordinate element has to be developed as yet to supplement the spiritual forces that are alive and active. But all the possibilities of such a perfect scheme of human happiness as Novalis dreamed of, are here,—Nature with all her magic beauty, Art in embryo, but with every promise of speedy and perfect development, and Religion, holy and mysterious mother, overshadowing all. Comfort without wealth, perfect physical health without passion, ambition without cruelty, love without desire, the enjoyment of life without forgetfulness of eternity, the combination of temporal and spiritual interests, gaiety without levity, the laugh that never hurts, the smile that is never deceptive,—clean bodies, keen minds, pure hearts,—what better world can philosopher construct, or poet dream of?

Introspection and Neurotic Literature

The two things that seem to have preserved the buoyancy of this people hitherto are the total absence of the habit of introspection, and their ignorance of the neurotic literature of the age. It is quite true that their feelings, with surprising and painful quickness, leap from depression to exaltation, and *vice versa;* but this swift succession of feeling is emotional, and not intellectual. Except on the occasion of confession, in which they are strongly advised to be brief and definite, they never look inwards to scrutinize motives or impulses. They know nothing of psychological analysis of themselves, and they are content to measure others by what they see, without desiring to unveil and pry into the hidden sanctuary where rests that Holy of Holies—the human soul! And hence there can be no morbidity here. They look, like children, at the surface of things, and as these surfaces are mostly smooth, and it is only beneath there is the ruffling of tempests, they are content to take life even so, and say, All is revealed, and all is well!

The Weltschmerz

It is a negative constituent of happiness, too, that hitherto they have never heard of the strange, modern literature that, commencing with this morbid anaysis of human thoughts and motives, ends in revolting realism and dreary pessimism. They know nothing of the *Weltschmerz,* have never heard of Parson Manders or Rosmer Solness, with his dreary verdict on his life: "As I look backwards, I have really built nothing, and sacrificed nothing to be able to build." Oswald Alving is yet a stranger; and happily the sculptor, Rubek, with his Irene and Maia are unknown names. They would not class the creator of such types with Shakespere, even if they knew them. In fact, they are a healthy people, and just as they never will be taught to appreciate high venison or rotten Stilton, so, too, they have not reached as yet that intellectual status where nerves seem to be everything, and healthy thought is not only unrefined but morbid. In fact, some one has called it:

Mundus mundulus in mundo immundo.

Will It Last?

Will all this last? Ah, there is the problem I am trying to solve here on this rock-shelf above the immaculate sea. Will not the *Zeitgeist* come along and seize these island people, as it has seized the world without? How can we stop the process of the suns, or turn back the hand on the dial of time? And if education has to advance, as it is advancing by leaps and bounds, must not the literature of introspection and bad nerves and pessimism creep in gradually, and affect the whole mental and moral life of the country? And then, what becomes of your physical and spiritual health, and the beautiful, happy balance and poise of faculties, neither enervated by disease nor warped by intellectual misdirection? It is a big problem; and push it as far back as we like, it will loom up suddenly some day, and demand a solution; or an unmolested influence, such as we see unhappily bearing bitter fruit in other and less favored lands.

An Amiel or Senancour Impossible

It is hard to imagine such a revolution in a nation's ideas as this supposes; and, as I study this strange people, here in their humid climate and surrounded by a misty and melancholy ocean; as I see them watching dreamily the sunsets over the western ocean, as only a poetic people may; dancing in ball-rooms to-night until twelve o'clock; reverently worshipping at the morning Mass; returning to their hotels, dripping brine from dress and hair; spending the day in excursions and amusements, but always ending it in the parish church; and, as I think you cannot move in any circle of society here, or change your location, or stir hand or foot without coming bolt upright against God; I conclude that a genius so varied and exalted will never long suffer itself to be linked with the spirit of the age or any other spirit of darkness, but will always rise above mere materialism on the wings of the poetic idea, and always keep within touch of reality through its moral and religious instinct. I doubt if Ireland will ever produce an Amiel, or a Senancour, or a Rousseau.

The Man of Letters

But the Man of Letters will come; and the Man of Letters will always set himself in opposition to what he is pleased to designate sacerdotalism. Literature and dogma have never yet been taught to go hand in hand. For Literature has a dogmatic influence of its own; and believes its highest form to be the didactic. Unlike Art, whose central principle is "Art for its own sake alone," Literature assumes and has assumed in all ages, but more especially in modern times, the privilege of "guide, philosopher, and friend" to the world. Hence, we find that the worst forms of literature are excused on the ground that they teach a lesson. "Anna Karénina," "Resurrection," "Ghosts," "Lourdes," "Rome," "Paris," are all sermons, told with all the emphasis, not of voice and accent, but of a horrible realism that affects one's nerves more terribly than the most torrential eloquence. And now that literature is pledged to preaching, it is doubtful if it ever will drop the rôle. And so the Man of Letters will come to Ireland, as he has come to France, to England, to Germany, and with him the seven other spirits, *Zeitgeist*, *Weltschmerz*, etc., to abide and take up their home, or to be exorcised and banished summarily and forever!

The One Enemy

And all the spirits have one enemy, and but one—the spirit of religion. This was the *L'Infame* of Voltaire, who dreaded it so much that he would banish from his republic of atheism even the ancillary arts of poetry and music and painting. Everything that savored of idealism, and appealed to aught but the senses, was ruthlessly ostracized. The fight in that unhappy country of his between the man of letters and the priest, between literature and dogma, lasts to this day, with such lurid manifestations, as French Revolutions, Carmagnoles, etc. Then came the man of letters in the shape of the scientist, also banishing from human thought everything that savored of the ideal, everything that could not be peered at in a microscope, or examined in a test tube. He has passed, too, but left his mark on the religious tone of England. Now comes the man of letters, with his religion of humanity, from the steppes of Russia to the Scandinavian mountains, and thence to the mud-dykes of Holland; and he, too, comes in the name of religion, with priests and ritual and ceremonies—above all, with dogma—the dogma that man is supreme, and there is no one like him in heaven or on earth.

This People of Destiny

And I can forecast the time when this people of destiny, here by the wild seas of the north, and right in the gangway of the modern world, will have to face and examine the dogma of this modern literature. Nay, I can even see certain vacillations and soul-tremblings under the magic of the sweet and delicious music of language, attuned and attenuated in accordance with the canons of modern, perfect taste. But I know that the sturdy character of the people, stubborn after their eight hundred years of fight, and their religious instincts which nothing can uproot, and their power of adapting all that is best in life with all that is useful for eternity, and, above all, their sense of humor, will help them, after the first shock, to vibrate back towards their traditional and historical ideals, and finally settle down into the perfect poise of reason and religion combined. They never will accept literature as dogma; but they may turn the tables, and make their dogmatic beliefs expand into a world-wide literature.

Literature Our Ally

That is just the point. Can literature be made our ally, as it has hitherto been our enemy? Are literature and Catholic dogma irreconcilable? He would be a bold man who would assert it, with Calderon and Dante before his eyes. But we do not sufficiently realize and understand that poetry, romance, art—everything that idealizes, is on our side. If Voltaire banished from the republic of letters everything that savored of chivalry, enthusiasm, poetry, heroism, it is quite clear that these must have been recognized as the allies of religion. And when the inevitable reaction took place, one by one these ambassadors were recalled, and at length religion was accepted and enthroned in the very places where she had abdicated or been expelled. So, Walter Scott's Waverly Novels prepared the way for the Tractarian Movement, and became its initial impulse; and Tieck, Novalis, the Schlegels, who formed the romantic school in Germany, prepared men's minds for Catholism by recalling the ancient glories that filled every city of Europe with churches and cathedrals, and the galleries of Italy with priceless and immortal art.

The Great Travelled

I have always to undergo a certain species of humiliation when I return home from the autumn holidays. People will ask: "Where did you go this year?" And I have to answer: "Only to Kilkee or Tramore!" Some gentle and modest questioner will say: "I hope you enjoyed yourself and had good weather." But there is a large and ever-growing class, who, when they receive that reply, suddenly drop or change the conversation, as if it were too painful to be pursued. You know them well. They are the world-explorers or globe-trotters, who have climbed the Pyramids and seen the Iceland geysers; who have glimpsed the interiors of the Lamaseries of Thibet, and visited Siberian prisons; who have wondered (that is, if they can wonder at anything) at the giant recumbent statue of Buddha in Ceylon, and read Aztec inscriptions in the ruined temples of Mexico; and to whom a dash at Constantinople or Cairo, or a run across the states to Vancouver, is considered a mere preliminary canter to a six-months' holiday across the planet. They are formidable folk to meet; and modest people shrink away into a kind of coveted annihilation, until they get beyond the shadow of such experienced and ubiquitous neighbors.

Lesser Experiences

There is a minor species of travelled people, however, who are more intolerant, and intolerable. They are the less enterprising, but more impressive holiday-makers, who are modest enough to admit that they have only climbed Mont Blanc and seen the Passion-Play; but who always ask you with a singular kind of pitiful contempt: "Is it possible you have never seen Spain? Really now you ought to go to Spain!" And you feel very humble, and indeed half-criminal; and you then and there resolve that your ultimate salvation depends on your having seen Spain, and that you must make the attempt, if it costs your life. And you regard these experienced people with a kind of admiring wonder; and think how unhappily nature has dealt with you in not inspiring you with such glorious and profitable ambitions; and endowing you instead with a kind of hopeless inertia, that makes the packing of a trunk, or the purchase of a Cook's ticket, a work to be dreaded and shunned. You admit how feebly you are equipped for life's serious work; and you make a desperate resolution that, come what will, you will see Spain and,—no, or die!

Is Travel a Necessity?

On more sober reflection, however, and when the awful sense of your inferiority has vanished, you may be disposed to reflect; and reflecting ask yourself, Is travelling abroad really essential to existence? or to health and long life? or to education? And is it some innate or congenital defect in your own nature that creates that repugnance to going abroad for your holidays? For really, it is just there that self-contempt comes in. And, as you reflect, you will probably recall the case of the vast multitudes who never leave their own country, nay, their own village, or townland, and whose lives are quite as laborious as yours. Here are nuns, for example, who for fifty years have never gone outside these convent walls; who have seen the same little span of sky, the same little patch of stars, during all that time; whose lives have been lives of unremitting labor, and who now, in the evening of life, take as cheerful an outlook over life and eternity as the most philosophical, or rather eupeptic, optimist. They listen to all recitals of foreign travels with a certain amount of interest, but without much envy. They have been content to live, to work, and are content to die. And they have never known, even for a moment, that sensation of ennui which will attack people in the hotels of Cairo, or the seraglios of Stamboul. Clearly then, travelling abroad is not an essential of existence, or even of health.

Nervous Irritability

Then, again, here are three or four thousand people in this remote parish, whose lives, too, are draped in the same sober monotone of place and scene and unintermittent toil; and somehow they never think it a necessity of existence to leave their homes, and see strange faces and foreign climes. And they live, and have perfect health and nerves and spirits, and thank God for His blessings, nay even for His visitations, when He does come to them under the disguise of sorrow. Moreover, our forefathers and our predecessors who had the same class of work to accomplish, with greater labor and more worries, never dreamed of an autumn holiday in France or Spain. And they lived to ripe old age, and dropped peacefully into peaceful graves. Ah, but! we get depressed, and the springs of all mental and bodily activity get dulled or broken, and the doctor says: "You must really go abroad and see strange faces and live under different circumstances, and pick up fresh elasticity of spirits by change, change!" Alas! it is the eternal question of nerves again. Nervous irritability is genius; nervous ennui, heresy; nervous literature, Ibsens and Mæterlincks; and one and only one remedy,—which is never more than a palliative, for the disease is deep-rooted—and that is change, change, change!

Travel and Education

But education? Is not travel here at least an essential? This, too, may be doubted. How very few celebrities, after all, made the "grand tour"! Did Shakespere or Spencer cross the English channel? Of those who did venture abroad in those days, how many repeated the experiment? Even in our times, let it be remembered that Byron and Shelley, Landor and Browning, were voluntary exiles, not travellers; and that if George Eliot could not get on without her annual trip to the Continent, Tennyson on the other hand rarely ventured from home. And Carlyle—ah! Carlyle, what it cost him to leave even his unhappy home at Chelsea, and get away amongst friends who were prepared to put pillows and roses under his nerve-distracted head! How he fumed and raged till he got back to his own dismal quarters again! And the two or three continental trips! *Ach Gott!* as he would say. Here is a specimen:

"We got to Putbus, doing picturesquely the way. A beautiful Putbus indeed; where I had such a night as should be long memorable to me; big loud hotel, sea-bathing, lodgers with their noises, including plenteous coach-horses under my window, followed by noises of cats, brood-sows, and at 2 p. m. by the simultaneous explosion of two Cochin-China cocks, who continued to play henceforth, and left me what sleep you can fancy in such quarters. * * * * Adieu! *Keil Kissen,* sloppy, greasy victual, all cold, too, especially the coffee and tea. Adieu, Teutschland! Adieu, travelling altogether, now and forevermore!"

Lord Bacon

Really, this kind of thing reconciles you to your lot, if you are unable, or unwilling, to leave your own land. And if you have the least experience in travelling, and understand ever so little of its worries and annoyances, even in these days of luxury, you begin to think, that except for the extremely mercurial, who cannot sit still, and the extremely depressed, who require frequent change, the game is hardly worth the candle. For after all, in the whole of Europe this moment, how many things are there which you would really like to see? I do not say, how many places and things are there which you would like to be able to boast you saw. But how many things, persons, places, do you really covet with the eyes of your imagination? Lord Bacon gives you a handsome list for selection. He tells every traveller what he ought to see. Here is the list: "The courts of princes, especially when they give audience to embassadors; the courts of justice, while they sit and hear causes; ecclesiastical consistories; the churches and monasteries, with the monuments which are therein extant; the walls and fortifications of cities and towns; havens and harbors, antiquities and ruins, libraries, colleges, disputations and lectures, shipping and navies; houses and gardens of state and pleasure near great cities; armories, arsenals, magazines, exchanges, bourses, warehouses, exercises of horsemanshop, fencing, soldiers and the like; comedies; treasures of jewels and robes; cabinets and rarities; and to conclude, whatever is memorable in the places where they go."

What Might Interest

Of all these, about nine-tenths, I should say, are inaccessible to the ordinary traveller. Of those that are accessible, I confess the churches and monasteries alone would interest me; and one thing more, which the writer has omitted,—the haunts and graves of great men. The room in the Roman College where St. Aloysius died would have more attraction for me than the Forum; and the places consecrated by the presence and ministrations of that sweet saint, Philip Neri, would drag me away from the spot where the mighty Caesar fell. I would of course visit the Colosseum, but I would see only the mangled remains of the young Christian athletes and virgins whose limbs were rent asunder down there in its arena for the name of Christ. And I would see it by moonlight also, but only to observe the shadowy figures who steal through the dark aisles and gather for sacred burial these hallowed remains. I would not give one precious quarter of an hour that I might spend in the Sacred Catacombs, to study the ruins of Poestum, or trace the broken splendors of Hadrian's villa; but I would rise with the dawn to be able to say Mass in that Mamertine prison, where the great apostles were incarcerated, and where they baptized their gaolers with the waters of that miraculous spring that flows there in the dark beneath my feet.

A Dialogue

But education? We are wandering a little, as befits the subject. Travelling is essential to education? Perhaps so. But the most one can ever hope to extract from a travelled man is the exclamation: I saw that! For example:

You.—"The Parthenon which after so many thousand years is yet the noblest temple—"

Traveller.—"Oh, yes! we saw the Parthenon, and the Acropolis!"

You.—"It cannot be any longer maintained that the Moorish or Saracenic influence was hostile to the arts of civilization when that magnificent relic of their architecture, the Alhambra—"

Traveller.—"The Alhambra! Oh we saw the Alhambra! 'Twas lovely!"

You.—"And so if you want to see at their best Fountains' or Melrose—"

Traveller.—"Oh, yes! We were there. We saw both! They are exquisite!"

You.—"I was just saying that if you want to see Fountains' or Melrose, visit them by moonlight. And you shall never know the vastness and sublimity of the Colosseum, until you startle the bats at midnight from its drapery of ivy, and—"

Traveller.—"Oh, yes! That's Byron, you know! No, Scott! Let me see:

> If you would see the—hem—aright,
> Visit it by the pale moonlight.

"Isn't that it? No? Well, then, 'twas Byron who said: 'Whilst stands the Colosseum,' etc., etc."

Who does not remember those two little girls whom Ruskin has pilloried forever in his *Fors Clavigera,*—who read trashy novels, and eat sugared lemons all the way between Venice and Verona, and whose only remarks on the scenery and associations were:

> "Don't those snow-caps make you cool?"
> "No—I wish they did."

Are they types?

Recollections of Travel

Ah, but the memory of people, places, scenes, you have beheld! Isn't that worth preserving? Yes! I make the concession candidly. You have hit the bull's-eye this time. The memory of travel is the real gain and blessing of travel, just as our memories of youth, and middle-age, have a charm which our experiences did not possess. It is a curious fact and well worth investigating. Sitting here by the fireside, the eye of memory travels with an acute, and a certain kind of pathetic pleasure, over all the accidents and vicissitudes of our long journey. How little it makes of the worries and embarrassments; how greatly it enhances the pleasures. You smile now at the inconveniences of that long, dusty, tiresome railway journey, which you thought would never end; at the incivility of the porters or waiters, who contemptuously passed you by for greater folk; at the polite rudeness of the hotel-keeper, who told you at twelve o'clock at night, when you stumbled half-dazed from the railway carriage, that he had not a single room available; at the long avenue of waiters and waitresses who filed along the hotel corridor at your departure expectant of much backsheesh, and ungrateful for little; at the cold of Alpine heights, and the heat of Italian cities in the dog-days; at the little black-eyed beggar who served your Mass for a bajocco, and turned somersaults at the altar free gratis; at the crush and the crowd, and the hustling and the elbowing in St. Peter's; at the awful extortions, made with the utmost politeness, by those charming and intolerable natives; of the eternal peculation by the bland and smiling officials, etc., etc.

Scenes From Memory

And you recall, with a pleasure you never felt in the experience, the long, amber-coloured ranges of snow-clad mountains sweeping into sight as the train rushes through horrid gorges, or creeps slowly up some Alpine spur that slopes its declivities to meet the demands of science; the vast vistas of snow-white palaces above the ever-blue Mediterranean; the long days spent in the cool galleries face to face with immortal paintings; the twilight of great churches with all their half-veiled splendors of marbles and pictures; that evening, when you watched the sun set across the Val d'Arno, and the strange blue twilight crept down before it, deepened into the purple black of the night; the hour you spent above the graves of Shelley and Keats beneath the pyramid of Caius Cestius; that organ recital in the great Italian Cathedral, when you thought you saw the heavens opened and the angels ascending and descending; the shock and terror at the sudden rocking of the earth at Sorrento; the cool quadrangle in the Dominican Convent, the play of the fountain, and the white-robed monks in the gallery overhead; the home-coming; the sight of ruddy English faces instead of the dusky, black-eyed Greek or Italian; the unpacking of your treasures; the steady settling down into the old groove of life, and the resumption of ancient habits.

Minor Troubles

There is no doubt but that here is pleasure, deep, unalloyed pleasure, independent of the vanity of being able to say: I was there! How do you account for it? Thus, my travelled friend! You see, wherever you went, you yourself were part and parcel of all you saw and felt, and you cast the shadow of self over all. And even a Lucretian philosopher will admit that self is the ever-present trouble, dimming and darkening all eternal splendors of space and time, and mingling its own bitter myrrh of thought and feeling with the brightest and most sparkling wine of life. Yes, you were worried here, and fretted there; the memory of your little annoyance was fresh, and you took it with you; and here you were the victim of weariness and ennui, and you sang *Home, sweet home!* in your heart. And your fellow-travellers, you remember, were sometimes disagreeable. You did not get on well together. It was all their fault, of course; they were so horribly impatient, and even ignorant. What pleased you, displeased them. You would have wished to linger over that immortal canvas, which you knew you would never see again; or you would have liked to try your imperfect Italian on that laughing little nigger who rolled out his musical language so softly as he twisted the macaroni between his dirty fingers; but you were hurried on, on by your friends, and you found it hard to forgive them. They wanted to linger over dainty goods in shop-windows here and there, or to listen to a barrel organ. You said, very naturally: Can't they see and hear these things at home? Why do such people ever travel abroad?

Two Classes

That, too, is simple of explanation. They have splendid physical health, and no minds worth speaking of. They cannot rest at home, just as the untamed animal spirits of a boy will not permit him to sit still for a moment. Now, Nature is a most even and impartial mother. She doles out her gifts with rigid impartiality. She has given some the affluence of great health and spirits, unburdened by imagination and unstinted by reflection. To others (shall we say they are her favorites?) she gives the superior gifts of mentality, with all the divine gloom and depression that invariably accompany them. The former, mercurial in temperament, race across Europe, dip here and there in some antique fountain of art or literature, but instantly shake off the dreaded beads of too much thought; attend great ceremonies; enjoy the three-hours' dinner at some palatial hotel; are noisy and communicative, and happy. They return fresh from their travels to tell their acquaintances: "We have been there! Really, now, you must go!" The others, if they can shake off the physical inertia which always accompanies and balances mental irritability, glide softly through Europe, linger over the spots sanctified by genius, spend quiet, dreamy hours in cool, shady galleries, avoid the big hotels, watch Nature in silence and the solitude of their hearts, and return to the winter fireside to embody in novel, or poem, their experiences, doubly hallowed in the light of memory. These are the men that make you despair, for they have the second-sight, the vision that rises with the dawn and haunts them till the dusk.

Memory and Art

This enchantment of memory is really much the same as the enchantment of art. A beautiful picture gives you more pleasure than the beautiful reality it represents. You dare not say it is greater, or more perfect, or more true than Nature; but you feel greater pleasure in the contemplation of it than in the vision of the reality. Why? Because you are not a part of it. You see it from the outside. Your personality forever jarring with itself and more or less out of tune, is not projected athwart it. You are a something apart; and you see it as a something that has no connection whatsoever with you. Hence its peace, its calm, its truth, are soothing and restful. Or, if there be figures in the picture, or something dramatic and striking, for terror or for pathos, they do not touch you with any emotion but that of curiosity and pleasure. You are in a theatre, and this is the stage; but the drama cannot touch you. That picture-frame, like that drop-scene, cuts you away from the representation. You are a spectator, not an actor. But in real life you cannot remain a spectator. Would to Heaven you could! You will have touched the great secret of all human philosophy when you have brought to your mind, in its daily and hourly action, the conviction that "Life is a stage, and all men players and actors thereon." But this is impossible and undesirable. You must play your own part, and it is mostly a tragic and solemn one.

The Magic of Childhood

This is the great secret of the happiness of childhood. Children are unconscious of themselves. They refer nothing to themselves. They hear of life, its vast issues, its tragedies, its trials, its weight of sorrows; but they can never for a moment believe that such things can affect themselves. The little things that do trouble them, they pass lightly over and forget. The little injustices that are done them they immediately condone. They have not as yet begun to refer all things in heaven and earth to themselves. They regard them as no part of their personality. Life is a picture—a pretty picture in a gilt frame. It is a gorgeous drama, where they can sit in the pit, or the boxes, according to their position in life, and look on calmly at Blue Beard and his wives or the madness of Ophelia, or the smothering of Desdemona, while they crunch their caramels, or smear their faces with sugared fruit. Life is a pretty spectacle, created specially for their amusement. If any one were to say: "There are Blue Beards yet in the world, and you may yet be a wife; or, you may yet be an Ophelia, and carry around you bundles of rue; or, you may encounter your Iago, and have your handkerchief stolen;" that child would laugh incredulously into your face. Unconsciousness and unbelief, or rather, all-trusting faith in its immunity from sin and sorrow, are the glorious charters of childhood; as they are also symptoms of perfect, unbroken health.

All Great Work Unconscious

The first moment of unrest, or subjectivity, or reference to ourselves, is the first moment also that marks our entrance on the stage of life; and it marks also the first step towards our failure. The unconscious actor is the greatest and the most perfect. Is it not a maxim of the stage: Lose your own personality in the person you represent? If you are introspective, or self-examining, or curious to know what the audience is thinking of you, you will soon hear hisses and tumultuous condemnation. Just as in spiritual life the secret not only of sanctity but of happiness, is abandonment of self, and repose in God, so in our mere earthly life we must abandon ourselves to our inspirations, or fail. The poet who tries to be a poet, will never be a poet. He may be an artist, or polisher, or filer of sentences and phrases; but he will always lack the higher afflatus. The saint who thinks he is a saint, ceases to be a saint. The patriot who begins to ask, how the welfare of his country will affect himself, ceases then and there to be a patriot. All great work is unconscious, and above all, unegotistical. The moment it becomes conscious, it becomes mechanical; and you can never turn a mechanic into a creator. Hence when critics say that Tennyson was an artist before he beame a poet, they imply that he never became a poet. For there never was a truer saying than the old trite one: *Poeta nascitur*. He may bury his gift, and stifle his creative powers, and become a *Poiētes apoiētes;* but his is a birthright that can never be bought or sold.

The Unrevealed

There is another great advantage in this reserve of foreign travel. Something as yet remains unrevealed. Remember that ennui is the disease of modern life; and that ennui is simply the repletion of those who have tasted too speedily, or too freely, at the banquet of life. Unhappy is the man who has parted with all his illusions; and such is he in a most special manner, who has seen all things, and tried all, and found all wanting. For the first view, the first experience, is the poetry of existence. And poetry, like reverence, will not tolerate familiarity. You won't rave about Alps, or Apennines, the second time you see them. You have acquired knowledge, and lost a dream. Now, the dream forever remains for one who has not seen but believed. The mystery, the wonder, the charm, are yet before him. He may yet see and be glad. Earth and sea hold all their miracles in reserve for him. He cannot sit down in middle age, and say: "I have seen all things beneath the sun; and lo! all is vanity!" No! he will not say that, so long as the bright succession of the world's wonders may yet file before him. He has always a reserve; and sinks even into his grave with all the hope and fascination, all the glamor and straining eyes of inexperience.

The Pleasure of Novelty

To one living at a distance from railways, the whistle of the engine gives a thrill of novelty, and a sudden pleasure. There is a romance, and even a poetry in railways. At least, to one unaccustomed to leave home, a railway journey is a rare enjoyment. He cannot see the great, smooth engine rolling into the platform, or behold the faces at the windows, or take his seat, without a certain excitement, or nervous thrill, that is utterly unknown to the experienced traveller. The comfortable, cushioned seat, the electric light overhead, the mirrors all around him, the new, strange faces, each with its secret soul looking out, anxious, hopeful, or perplexed; the very isolation of his travelling companions and the mystery that hangs around their unknowness; the quiet that settles down on the carriage as it glides out so smoothly from the station; the rapid succession of scenes that move across the field of vision—all is novel, all unexperienced, all delightful! He would give the world to know who, or what, is that old gentleman who has pulled his rug around him and is buried in his papers; or that young, pale fellow, who is so much at home, he must be a much travelled man; or that young girl, who is gazing so steadfastly through the window. And the real pleasure is, that all is mystery, and wonder, and the unknown, even to the end.

A Cunarder

Twenty-five years ago I thought that a Cunard, or White Star liner, outward bound, was the most interesting sight on earth. I think so still. The silence of its movements, its obedience to the slightest touch, the risks and hazards before it, when it is but a speck on the illimitable deep, and the moonlight is all about it, or when it is rocked from billow to billow, like a cork; but, above all, the strange, mysterious faces that look from behind their veils at you, and the stranger drama that is being enacted there—all conspire to make that floating caravenserai one of those objects of interest and wonder that carry with them always the glamor and mystery of another world. That is, to the inexperienced. I dare say, that commercial traveller who has crossed the Atlantic twenty times, and who seems so much at home there upon the sloping deck, thinks otherwise. Probably, he is calculating how much he will win at poker or euchre; or what seat he shall have at table. The lady, too, who has just done Europe, and who looks so tired and *blasée,* is just hoping that the beastly voyage may be soon over, that she may plunge once more into the glorious whirl of New York excitement. But to the untravelled, the inexperienced, all is wonder and mystery, from the mysterious being up aloft who is the master of our destines, to the grimy fireman, who comes up from the Inferno, to catch one breath of fresh salt air.

Incognito

If the untravelled is wise, he will speak to no one but in monosyllables, and preserve his own incognito and inexperience to the end. Thus, he, too, will be a mystery, and somewhat interesting to others, who will be dying to penetrate behind his mask. And all around will bear the glamor of unknownness to his imagination. It is horrible—that disillusion about people, around whom you have woven your own webs of fancy. Now, if you accost that commercial traveller, you will, you must, reveal the fact that you are crossing the Atlantic for the first time; and down you go several degrees in his esteem. Or, if you are happy enough to get acquainted with that young lady in the canvas chair, blue veiled, and with infinite rugs about her, she will probably tell you "she has just done Yurrup, and is tired of the whole show." And the airy web of fancy is rudely torn asunder. Or, if you should come to know the officers, and they, with their usual kindness, tell you all about their vessel, and their experiences, or gossip about the passengers, or show you the tremendous mechanism that is the heart-throb and life-pulse of the ship, you will have to come down to the standpoint of common-place; and before you step ashore at New York, your nerves will have cooled down, and you will regard the ship of fancy as a black old hulk, with a hideous brass kettle in its centre.

Reticence and Reverence

There is a great deal more than we are accustomed to think in this habit of reticence and reverence. Touch not, taste not, if you would keep fresh the divine fancies that spring from a pure imagination, excited by pure and inspiring literature. It was the irreverent curiosity of our first parents that opened their eyes to unutterable things. They touched, tasted, and saw. Better for them and their posterity had they kept the reverence due to the behests of the Most High, and with it their unsullied innocence and blessed want of knowledge. There was a tradition of our childhood that the mother bird would desert a nest once breathed upon by others. The place was profaned and she would haunt it no longer, even though the blue or speckled eggs should never come to maturity. Even so with the spirit. It refuses to go back to places once dishallowed by knowledge. It prefers to hover over lonely heights, and to haunt unpeopled solitudes; and there to keep the virginal freshness of its inexperience unsullied by knowledge that opens the eyes of mind and body, but blinds the vision of the soul.

The Glamor of the Sea

But, coming back under the umbrage and gloom of great trees from the illimitable expanses of sea and sky. I ask myself why I experience a sudden narrowing and contraction of spirit, although my mind is as free and untrammelled as before. And why do the people, sick of their prison houses and the narrow limitations of daily life, seek for freshness down there as close to the sea as they can go? For they will not look at the sea from afar, nor from safe vantage grounds, but they creep down and sit on rocks that overhang the tremendous depths; and imperil their lives by going lower and lower still, until their feet are washed by the incoming irresistible tides. What do they want? What do they seek? It is not pure air alone. That they can have on mountain summits. Yet they never go to the mountains. But the most unpoetic, unromantic, prosaic people will seek the seashore, and remain there the whole day long, and tear themselves away from it with difficulty, and even when it is only a memory and a dream, will speak of it the whole winter long, and bear the worries and work of the year in the hope that they shall seek and see the sands and waves and the far horizon again.

The Unbounded

I cannot explain it, except by the theory of our universal and insatiable craving after the unbounded, the Infinite. You imprison the soul, when you limit its aspirations. It must be in touch with the universe. It is the one thing on earth, the only thing, that cannot make its home here. All things else are content to do their little work, perform their little part, and die. Winds arise and blow, and pass away; seas come and go, and scatter themselves on the sands; leaves bud and develop, and fall; animals are born, pass on to maturity, and return to the inorganic state. Man alone looks out and beyond this planet. Here he hath no lasting dwelling-place. His soul is with the stars. And therefore it chafes at its imprisonment in the body; and even the accidental environments of place and scenery affect this strange, homeless exile, that is forever pining after its own country. How sweetly the Church interprets this feeling in the beautiful Benediction Hymn:

Qui vitam sine termino
Nobis donet in patria.

And that is the vision we look for when we strain our eyes across the sunlit sea, and dream of things beyond the visible horizon, but not beyond the horizon of our hopes.

From "Parerga"

Three Questions

"I would ask thee three questions," said the Prince. "And first: when is man greatest?"

"When he laughs amid his tears; when he suffers, and is silent; when he labours, although he foresees he never shall be paid," answered the man.

"Where is woman greatest?" asked the Prince.

"By the cradle of her child, by the couch of the dying, at the feet of God," said the man.

"When is God greatest?" asked the Prince.

"There are no degrees in God," said the man devoutly. "He is always greatest and best."

"Come!" said the Prince to his companion; "I have found him whom I sought."

Sentiment

I know that some people decry sentimentality,—good, pious people,—on the score of religion; fashionable people because it is emotional; and emotion is the one unforgivable sin. The former forget that shortest, but sweetest text in all Holy Writ: *And Jesus wept!* The latter might know that it is this very emotionalism that marks them off from the animal creation, inasmuch as it is neither instinct nor passion, nor sensuous nor base, but only some higher element, consecrated by a memory tenacious of what is tender and reverent, and softened down by that sense of dependence or protection that is the highest bond of social life. Oh, yes! Thank God for our poets; and thanks, O shade of Tennyson, for that line, no matter how sad it may be:

> "The tender grace of a day that is dead
> Shall never come back to me."

Contrasts of Life

Nothing surprises me more than the contrasts of life. I notice that sometimes a little circumstance that passes unheeded and ineffectual in every-day life, becomes suddenly magnified in a certain juncture of accidents into an event of vast importance. And the most trivial offence against morality, which perhaps for generations has passed unheeded, suddenly develops into a crime, which receives exemplary but disproportionate punishment. But these singular contrasts are in no wise so manifested as in the estimate that is placed by men on human life. Here in the wards of a hospital is a little child whose life is imperilled in the grip of some dire disease. Lights are lowered; footfalls are made inaudible by slippers of felt; night and day, a skilled and trained nurse never leaves that bedside; grave doctors come in three or four times a day, examine with knitted brows the diaries or noctaries of the nurses—pulsations, temperature, food, liquids, the action of medicines; develop furious tempers if there is the slightest appearance of neglect; anxiously consult with one another; open heavy tomes for new lights; go away perturbed; return with deeper furrows on their foreheads; and all this science and skill and zeal—to save that little thread of life that vibrates in that tiny child.

A Defeat

And if death intervenes doctors and nurses feel that they are defeated and shamed. They pass by that little waxen figure with averted eyes and downcast heads. Death is the victor, and he waves his black flag in derision above their heads. There was *life*,—life in its most humble and tiniest form, and they have failed to save it. Yet those same doctors will pass from the bedside of that child where they fought such a desperate battle, and, taking up the morning newspaper in the hospital surgery, read with perfect composure and little interest of twenty thousand lives lost in a tidal wave in Japan, or a thousand lives lost in a South American earthquake, or a regiment or two blown to atoms suddenly by a concealed mine in some mad human conflict. How do you explain it? Professional honour? No. That won't do. Honour is not at stake. They have done all that men can do. Tenderness for that child? No, alas! The cases are too common; and tenderness vanishes through familiarity. And they don't allude to honour; and they don't assume a tenderness they are far from feeling. No! It is life! life! It is their duty, their vocation, to save life, no matter how mutilated and miserable it shall be. And they have failed.

A Returned Exile

Here is a poor young girl who sat out during the warm days in the sunshine, eagerly grasping every sunbeam to extract from it a life-elixir. A few years ago, conscious of her great beauty, she almost spurned the flags of the village street, as she walked with springing step in all her Sunday finery, and knew that the eyes of many hungered after her. Then her own home became too small for her ambition. America alone was large enough for her desires. She went away, became a unit, an insignificant unit amongst millions, whose eyes, dazzled with the glare of gold, had no sight for her beauty. Then came sickness, sadness, a craving for the old home, where she could at least die in peace, with friendly faces around her. She sat out during these few weeks, patient and sorrowful, her physical beauty etherealised by the dread disease that was slowly eating away her life. She has disappeared. It is easy to imagine the rest. The eternal hacking cough, the night-sweats, the ever-growing weakness, the depression, the despair—the calling on God at the midnight hour to plunge her into the blessed forgetfulness of a dreamless sleep!

Death, the Hope-Giver

And yet, if one in mercy, whispers even the name of death as the one hope-giver, she shudders, looks frightened, and weeps. She cries all night long for unconsciousness, for sleep. But the unconsciousness of death is an unspeakable terror. Why this inconsistency? Is not death a blessed thing,—God's greatest and most beautiful angel, who comes to us so softly, and so gently unweaves the bands of flesh, and touches so quietly that wound that the very touch is an anæsthetic; and gradually weakens and uncoils the springs of existence, so that when at last he touches the last frail thread, it snaps without pain, and the soul sinks into a langour that is a sweet prelude to the eternal rest? Why do men fear it? Is it the inertia of life that will not bear transmission? Or the habit of life that will not bear being broken? Or the dread of

> "The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
> No traveller returns"?

Or a foolish fear, as of children who see spectres everywhere, and will not walk on unknown land, lest unseen terrors should leap forth to paralyse or appal?

The Man With the Hoe

I am not at all sure but that manual training should go hand in hand with, and even precede, mental training. Very often the mind, slower in its development than the body, can afford to wait. And, besides, manual training is mental training, inasmuch as it develops powers of observation, accuracy of thinking, patience in watching details, and the labour of perseverance. But, apart from that, no mental training is a compensation for feeble muscles, weak nerves, myopia, and the host of other evils that are inseparable from purely sedentary lives; and no mental acquirement or intellectual success is compensation for that growing contempt for honest manual labor which is becoming one of the most vicious and unpleasant symptoms of our advanced civilization. "Back to the land!" is the cry of all economists of the present day; and "Back to manual work!" may also be the warcry of those who are painfully conscious that our advanced civilization is more or less that of a race in its decrepitude, and on the downgrade towards extinction. At least, it seems very certain to some minds that it is the "man with the hoe," and not the man with the pen, we need mostly in these times.

Idleness

Hence I cannot help feeling a certain contempt or loathing when I behold young men, just budding into the twenties, calmly putting the pillows of old age under their elbows, and settling down to a long life of most ignoble inactivity. It is not alone the Sybaritic baseness and selfishness of the thing that repels, but the very horror at the incongruity of studied idleness and uselessness amidst the general activities of Nature. Clearly these are mere parasites of Nature, and the word has an ill signification. It means not only idleness and uselessness, but theft, disregard for others' rights, preying on the industries of others, eating bread that is not righteously earned. It may be a safe life and a secure one, where none of the lower evils are encountered, and there is always a kind of dulcet monotone of undisturbed serenity. But if great trials are avoided, great deeds also remain undone, and, in hugging a miserable sense of security, the possibility of nobleness is utterly lost.

Some Great Ideal

Every man should have a great ideal in life—some high point in character or action to be aimed at, even though it be never attained. No man is absolute arbiter of his fate, or parcellor of his destiny. Will-power counts for much, but only when conscience is laid aside. "If you want to make your way in the world," says a witty French writer, "you must plough through humanity like a cannon-ball, or you must glide through it like a pestilence." Had he his countrymen Napoleon and Voltaire before his mind, when he penned these words? But "making one's way in the world" is not the attainment of the high ideal of which I speak. It is rather a low ideal, the poor ambition of fox or beaver, or their human types in commerce or the professions. It is an animal instinct. It marks a man as belonging to a degenerate type. It is not the symbol or phrase that designates the higher call to the higher issues towards which humanity is bound to tend.

Epitaphs

Better to have written on our tombs: "Laboravi," or "Passus sum," than "Felicissimus fui." I have seen two faces quite lately on whose foreheads such inscriptions had been already chiselled. One was the face of a gentlewoman, grown old in peace and prosperity, on whom the world had always smiled. Peace had been her portion, and old age was not infirmity, but the crown and consummation of the unbroken felicities that had been her lot in life. One could be thankful, but one could not worship there. The other had been sculptured by lifelong sorrow,—perpetual sickness, loss of material resources, falling away of friends, deception where honour had been expected, derision for no fault but for having borne the whips of Fate. It was one of those faces, which externally calm, are ever ready to break their surface serenity by the trembling of a lip or the gathering and falling of a silent tear. One might well worship here. We are in the sanctuary of sorrow.

An Impartial but Unreasonable Thing

It is hard to argue against the fear of Death, especially with the young. So many passed by, and they chosen! So many old and forlorn creatures for whom life had no pleasure, because no hope, trembling on the verge, and yet apparently forgotten by the angel Death! So many worthless creatures, whose lives do not contain a single utility,—nay, whose very existence seemed detrimental to every cause and individual with whom they came in contact; and lo! Death passes them by, and leaves the barren fig-trees untouched; and lays his heavy hand on some life, that was bourgeoning out in all fair promises of vast utility to itself and mankind. So argues a second patient of mine, a young man, stricken with that dread disease, cancer. He is not impatient nor disconsolate. He is resigned. But he cannot understand. He is perplexed by the mystery of things. He has had his sentence of death duly passed on him; and the numbered hours are fleeting swiftly by. But he is young. He clings to hope. The local doctor is on his holidays. He has a chance now. Perhaps some other may speak a word of hope. He summons him by telegram. He presents the following diagnosis of his formidable disease.

A Personal Diagnosis

"Seven months ago, in South Africa, I underwent an operation for epithelioma of the antrum, necessitating the excision of the left superior maxilla; and, on account of exopthalmus, the left eye had to be enucleated. Since then my voice has been badly impaired; and so I wrote down these particulars, my artificial palate not working properly of late. A few months after the operation, anæsthesia extended along the temple and forehead on the left side. It has now crossed the middle line, and involves the whole forehead and scalp. I have been laid up for five days with a swollen eye-socket. It is with respect to the latter that I wish to consult you. Since the operation, the socket has been in a state of inflammation, with a profuse whitish discharge. It is now greatly swollen. The temple on the same side is also much swollen. The pain is not very great, but there is a feeling of uneasiness and oppression. The wound cavity left by the operation is looking well, and there is no evidence of recurrence in that quarter. I cannot account for the accentuation of the anæsthesia, for its extension, and for the aggravated state of the eye-socket. I would like you to tackle the eye-socket particularly; that region is very anæsthetic, and is affecting my head greatly. I may mention there is still some granulated tissue and constant extravasation of blood behind the eye-socket or at the floor of the orbit, as I pay constant attention to it, and know how it is getting on."

A Secret Science

I doubt if there were on this planet a more surprised man than that doctor, when he read this diagnosis. The science of medicine is a secret science. Very wisely, its professors have wrapped up all its principles and discoveries in an occult and dead language. Its prescriptions are written in a kind of luminous shorthand, of which only some letters are of Roman type, the rest being cabalistic signs. It is a kind of calyptic cypher of which only one man holds the key. It is pitiful, but instructive to see how an ordinary layman turns over the mysterious paper in his hand, and stares in blank ignorance at it; and to witness his surprise when the chemist glances over it, and proceeds to interpret it in act. Then all medical books are written in great ponderous symbols of sesquipedalian Greek, as if the writers kept Liddell and Scott always on their desks, and picked out the longest and hardest words. And then—watch the contemptuous and angry stare with which any layman, or even neophyte, is crushed who dares to touch even the fringe of medical mystery. It is a kind of sacrilegious invasion into a region where only the initiated are admitted; and happy is the unhappy wight who is let off easily with the warning: "You had better leave these things alone, young man!"

Other Sciences

It is the same with the Science of law. Here the adage holds, "The man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client." And we know how sternly is the prescription enforced in the courts of justice, that no man can be heard unless through the lips of a lawyer. You may be as learned as Scaliger, and have all the legal lore of Chitty and Bacon and Coke at your fingers' ends; but if you presume to infringe upon the hereditary rights of the legal profession, you may be assumed to have sacrificed your best interests. "By whom are you represented, sir?" is the dire question. "By myself!" "Oh!" And your case is lost, that is, if you are permitted to speak at all; for, in certain courts, you cannot plead except through the instrumentality of a lawyer. Is this right? That is not the question. We are but stating facts—that a cordon is drawn around the learned professions by rule and statute, by prescription and tradition; and all who are not initiated into the mysteries, who have not eaten dinners and sawed bones, are rigidly excluded. Right or wrong this exclusiveness undoubtedly surrounds the professions with a certain atmosphere of reverence which materially helps to keep sacred the inner workings, which would soon be profaned by exposure.

Theology a Commonage

Strange to say, it is only theological science that has no such bounds and ramparts as these. It is a commonage where every one may stray at his own sweet will. It has been invaded, overrun by every class and every individual from the beginning of Christianity until now. Under the Jewish dispensation, it was kept apart and sacred from the multitude,—hedged in by every kind of legislation, primitive and prohibitive. No man dared touch the Holy Mountain; no one but the High Priest was privileged to enter the Holy of Holies. One tribe was set apart for the priesthood. All teaching and all legislation came from the lips of a consecrated priesthood. Still more exclusive and dominant were, and are, the sacred hierarchies of the Eastern religions. The Lamas and Brahmins allow no lay-interference with their privileges. Even kings and emperors must keep aloof. Their lamaseries and monasteries are sacred ground, where no one dare trespass without permission. Their traditional teachings are such that no man dares contravene or challenge. But no sooner was Christianity established than a Simon Magus tried to penetrate and purchase its mysterious powers; and from the first, laymen, from the Emperor down to the prefect, sought to usurp the sacred rights of the Christian priesthood, and mould the dogmas of the Christian faith to suit political exigencies or private whims.

The Great Rebellion

Then came the great rebellion, with its cardinal principle that theology was no science; that religion had no mysteries; and that every man had a perfect right to frame his own dogma according to the direction of private interpretation. And whilst all other sciences became more exact in their guiding laws, and sought to render more rigid every day the boundaries of professional exclusiveness; whilst great generalisations broke up into special departments, and each department surrounded itself by *abattis* after *abattis* of rules and ceremonies, the vast domain of theology was broken into by every scarilegious and impious speculator, and all its mysteries were profaned by hands that held them up to the public gaze either as commonplace truths that no man could deny, or fraudulent presumptions that no man could accept. And to-day, scientific men of every rank and grade, biologists, geologists, astronomers, legislators in every shape, literary men through the press, judges on the bench, and even the "man in the street" crowd through the broken defences and tumbled barricades to plough and sow, and reap a sorry harvest where once was the wheat that made the Bread of Life, and the wine that germinated virgins.

An Unscientific Departure

Apart from the desecration and the unreasoning fury and folly of all this, it is a distinct departure from the secret and inviolable laws that direct the operations of evolution in Nature and Society. For we know that the lower the organism, the more simple are its organs and operations. In certain zoöphytes, each part is capable of every function. As we advance higher in the scale, the functional energies, becoming more extended, demand new organs for their operation; until we reach the higher mammals, where every function has its own specific organ, localized and developed. The same tendency exists in the body politic, where all the energies are again specifically located, and, though obedient to and progressing from a common centre, are concentrated in some council, or society, or department, whose operations, if controlled from a centre, are yet specifically distinct, and more or less independent. In the science of theology alone, there is, on the part of the masses, an idea that, dissolved as a science, it had better be allowed to drift back to primitive elements—which are the thoughts of individuals—for dogmata, and the vagaries of human passion for moral and ethical principle.

Theology a Science

And yet theology is a science, a great science, a complicated science; a science to the upbuilding of which were devoted the energies of the greatest intellects that have become incarnated on this planet. A world of iconoclasts, such as that in which we live, may pass by with unbowed heads the statues of St. Augustine and St. Thomas; and may affect never to have seen the shrines where saints and scholars, like Ambrose and Bernard, are niched for ever. But they cannot break them. And so long as the printing-press shall last, there shall remain the record of their studies in the greatest of human sciences, and the results of their researches into the recesses of mysteries, which are to-day, as yesterday, as closed secrets to the eyes of science as they were when men believed that the heavens were domed above the earth as the centre and pivot of space. It is pitiful to see the easy and flippant way in which modern sciolists dispense with the consideration of questions that agonized the minds of Tertullian and Augustine.

No Mystery in Medicine

Yes, my good doctor was much surprised. He seemed not able to take his eye from that page where the dying boy had recorded the dread symptoms of the disease that was slowly eating away his life. He whistled softly to himself, looked curiously at the patient, whispered the mysterious words, "epithelioma," "enucleated," "antrum," "maxilla," and finally asked:

"You have been a medical student?"

"No!" was the faint, muffled whisper that came from the diseased throat. "I am a journalist!"

"Oh!"

"But," the doctor said, after a pause, "no one but a medical expert could have written this?"

"I made a study of the disease when I knew I was affected," was the reply.

"Rather a foolish thing," said the doctor, maintaining the professional exclusiveness.

"Not at all," was the reply. "There is no mystery about it."

The doctor shook his head. This was rank heresy to his mind. He turned to me.

Ultra Crepidam

"Strange," he whispered, although the hideous malady had destroyed the boy's hearing, "how things work. The blow falls here and there; and there appears to be no rule, no uniformity, no consistency."

I nodded acquiescence.

"If any one were to ask why this boy, clever, accomplished, enterprising, should have been struck down on the very threshold of a brilliant career, whilst hundreds of mere hinds and louts go free, where would be the answer?"

The good doctor never saw that he was passing *ultra crepidam.* He who would resent, who did resent, the trespass of that poor boy upon the sacred precincts of medical science, was now unconsciously usurping the office of theologian. For medical science has only to deal with facts, I presume,—physiological facts, pathological facts, *materia medica,* etc., etc. What has a doctor to do with philosophy,—with motives, reasons, causes of things? Let him keep to his scalpel and his stethoscope! But no! Every one must have his say about these transcendent mysteries that have ever stupified and puzzled the human mind, as if they were market-merchandise, to be turned over, and pulled asunder, and examined and valued by every hind, or huckster, or *vivandière,* who wants a cheap bargain. Well, after all, it argues the existence of something more than a beaver or squirrel faculty in man, and, as such, is worthy of some esteem. I thought this, but did not say it to my good doctor. Then I took the thought home with me. It was my property.

An Autumnal Type

My first autumnal type has plunged suddenly downwards from affluence to poverty, and has kept his equanimity unruffled. He had been in the enjoyment of some thousands a year; had had a suburban villa so filled with all sorts of art-treasures that one could scarcely move around his rooms. The walls were so lined with etchings and engravings, statuettes and pictures, bronze busts and plaques, that scarcely one square inch of paper was visible. Out of doors his gardens stretched up in stately terraces, one rivalling the other in splendour, until the whole beautiful vista terminated in a pavilion, again filled with all kinds of costly and artistic things gathered from repositories in the great cities of the world. Here, from time to time, that is very often, he brought together numerous friends from city and town, regaled them with every luxury, amused them with every kind of entertainment, until the place became a little Paradise above the sea, which lent to the scene its own enchantment. Then came the crash. The whole thing vanished like a dream. It was many years after that when I visited the place again. I had seen it in the very zenith of its glory, and had taken away and stored up in the maps of memory a beautiful picture of the place, of its surroundings, of its generous and kindly master. I passed by in the dusk of the evening. The high wall that shielded from vulgar observation all this loveliness was broken down. I went in. The magnificent pavilion was a mass of ruin; its perfect flower-beds were overgrown with nettles. The splendid urns that capped the pedestals were slimy and broken. It was a picture of ruin and desolation.

Guarda e Passa

Soon after I met the former master of this ruined paradise. Although past his seventieth year, he was still in all his autumnal splendour. Fate and ill-fortune had not touched him. The same brightness, the same cheerfulness, the same bonhomie, the same optimism that had made him the centre of his circle some years before, had not abandoned him in adversity and penury. "I am a happier man to-day," he said, "than when I had thousands to spend. I have a room during the summer down near the sea, and two rooms here in the city for the winter, and a cool hundred a year. I have no responsibility now. I needn't ask John, Dick, or Harry to dine, and to tell you the truth," he added, with a smile, "I'm not likely to be asked myself."

"What?" I cried. "You, who entertained like a prince—do you mean to tell me that you are never challenged by any of your former friends to a paltry dinner?"

"Never!" he said frankly. "And what is more, they cut me here in this very street!"

"The hounds!" I couldn't help saying. "Do you mean to say that not even ——— has an open house for you?"

He shook his head, but always smiling.

"He doesn't see me when we pass here. Or rather he does, and goes to the other side of the street."

A Philosopher

"Why, the last time I saw him," I cried, "'twas in the Pavilion. He had a glass (and a good long, tall one it was) of champagne in his hand, and he was diving into a lobster salad as hard as he could. I remember I had to jump his long spider legs when I was coming away."

"My dear fellow," he said, "don't you know 'tis all human nature? When I had all these friends at the Pavilion, feeding them and entertaining them, I was pleasing myself. There is *one* phase of human nature. When *they* choose to cut me, there is *another*. Did I expect anything else? Certainly not. I know the world too well. And what difference does it make? I can now pass along here without bothering about anyone. I can stop and look at the shop windows without being molested. I know no one, and no one knows me. *Tant mieux!* Hallo Jiff! Jiff! Jiff!"

He took a boatswain's whistle from his vest pocket and looked anxiously around. Far away, a little black, woolly terrier was dodging tram-cars, side-cars, and passengers. When she heard the well-known whistle she scampered over to her master's feet.

"Good day," he said; "I am glad to see you for old times' sake."

"Good day," I replied; "I am glad to have seen the greatest Irish philosopher after Berkeley."

Another Type

It is a gusty, windy, autumnal day. The wild west wind has burst his bonds and is thundering up from the horizon, driving huge black clouds before him, like the disorganized phalanxes of a conquered army. And he has caught in his fierce embraces the forest trees, and shaken them, and clashed them together, till the whole sky is mottled with flying leaves, spinning in the whirlwind; and the ground is growing thick with the red refuse of the dying year. And, quite appropriately, another autumnal type of character crosses my path. He is grizzled and gray before his time; and some sharper chisel than the years has cut channels in his cheeks, and sunk the orbits of eyes that smoulder in repose, but gleam with a terrible light when you touch one subject. And how can you avoid it, when it embraces everything of interest,—that is, men and women—the world—the race—humanity Tolerant enough, polite, even charitable in a large measure, he becomes absolutely ferocious when you turn the conversation on the *Zeit-Geist*. The fact is, he commenced badly,—with a large, childlike, hopeful, trusting faith in human nature, which has now changed into a fanatical hatred. I can quite understand it, although he has never explained.

Early Education

I see him coming forth from a home where he was surrounded with all that was sweet and beautiful and sacred, where he never leaned against anything harder than a pillow, and the flutter of a rose-leaf was not allowed to ruffle his sleep. He was taught—*O stulti et caeci corde!*—that the whole world was like this!—that truth, honour, purity, sweetness, modesty, benevolence, were to be his guardian angels through life; and that, above all, he should smile on the world to get back smiles in return. It was a long story, the story of his disillusion, for he clung with despairing tenacity to his childhood's principles, until, one by one, they came to be disproved, and the last shred of their protection was torn away, leaving him naked to his enemies. What was worse, he found, in all authors who had become sacred to him by reason of their lofty standing in literature or from early associations, that the same principles, endeared to him by early teaching, were carefully inculcated until they had become a faith, a religion, interwoven into his life.

Disillusion

The progress of the world, the perfectibility of man, the advance of the race from civilization to a yet higher civilization, the elimination of all physical evil and all moral taint, until the apex was reached, where man should stand forth the immortal realization of an idea,—all these phrases and sentences had become the symbols and embodiment of the theories that had touched the enthusiasm of his youth, and inspired the more sober opinions of middle age. Alas! slowly and painfully he awoke to the knowledge of human imperfection, deepening, as the years advanced, into a knowledge of human ignorance and iniquity, and culminating in the autumnal years into a recognition or belief in almost universal depravity. He was not saddened, but maddened, by the revelation. Even though it had slowly grown into a conviction, it carried with it the shock, the surprise of a sudden unveiling of deeps too terrible to be contemplated or measured. Like some monomania that is suddenly engendered by brain fever, or that grows out of painful experience, his mind was ever revolving around it; and his conversation, no matter from what distant pole it started, invariably turned back to the one topic on which the wheels of thought moved as on a pivot.

Education and Experience

"I can pardon a good deal," he would say, "but I cannot condone your crime in educating children as you do. You teach them that it is dishonourable to lie or steal; you teach them to be merciful and kind and self-effacing; you teach them an altruism which is divine rather than human. And you teach all this on the understanding that the world will give back as it receives, and mirror the riant and bland expressions of ingenuous youth. You take that child from school, and the first lesson the world teaches him is, that all the wheels of life and society are moved by lying and hypocrisy. You place that boy behind a counter where, if he lies not, he is instantly dismissed. He is taught, and not only taught, but ordered, to put a price on his goods and merchandise not according to market values, or current charges, or a scale of legitimate profit, but according to the appearance of his customers. You put him in a fair or market. He instantly knows that he must lie foully for self-protection, for every man amongst these thousands has come hither to swindle or to cheat. You give him a profession. He lies with his fingers on his patient's pulse. And he will save the most consummate scoundrel from the gallows, and drive the most innocent beneath it, for that bribe called a fee."

Justice Blind

"Look at your Courts of Justice. Every policeman knows that to gain the good-will of his officer, he must swear up to the mark. Every Crown Prosecutor feels that he is not there to discriminate the guilty from the innocent; but to put the halter around the neck of that trembling wretch in the dock. The quarry has to be run to ground, and he has to do it. That is all! His professional reputation will suffer if that wretch escapes. Tears of wife or children, or thier unutterable delight; despair of devils, or ecstasy of angels, such as will alternate in these human hearts contingently upon the one word uttered by yonder bland foreman,—these have nothing to do with the matter. He wants that one word, *Guilty!* otherwise that venison pasty will be tasteless, and that champagne will be flat as ditchwater. And all the time Justice stands blindfolded with her scales in her hands. Why should the bandage fall or be removed? Will not her paid advocates lead her aright, and drop that heavy sword into the scales against the condemned with a solemn and conscientious *Vae Victis?*

A Fagin University

And your statesmen! Here is the sublime "He has lied boldly," said Talleyrand. "There's the making of a mighty statesman in him." "Diplomacy," "statecraft," "political foresight," "civic wisdom," etc., etc., what an accommodating language! How it lends itself to euphemisms! And how beautifully men gather up the skirts of easy words and wrap them around bald and naked ugliness, as the clothes of the world hide and dissemble all the ugliness of deformed humanity! "But," he cried, with a fillip of his finger, "a truce to all that! I don't heed it! Let the world damn itself in its own fashion. I'm not going to play the part of the faithful Abdiel. But," he cried with bitter emphasis, "if I had the education of children in my hands, I would have a Fagin-school with several Artful Dodgers in every parish to teach the young idea how to adapt itself to the larger and more intricate systems of prevarication and swindling that are current in the wide world of men. And I would teach them to steel their hearts against every human feeling; and smile as their seniors smile when they are practicing the arts of hypocrisy and deceit." I shuddered at this tirade against the species. He went away with his head down and a frown on his fine features.

Cirrhi and Cumuli

The next evening, I thought, I should not let even one of such glorious October sunsets escape me. Fading and evanescent—as all beautiful things —indeed, as *all* things are (but somehow the beautiful seems more frail than the sombre and the dreadful, probably because we wish it to remain),—yet, there is no reason why we, too, frail and evanescent beings, should not take from them such pleasures as they afford us. And surely, if there be a harmless gratification, it must be that which arises from the contemplation of such sublimities as the mighty Artist and Architect of the Universe prepares for his wondering, but ungrateful children. This evening, as if with the touch of a magician's wand, all the sombre splendours of last night had vanished; but there was quite enough of water-vapour to catch and reflect the beauty of the dying sun. Instead of vast purple and black cumuli, resting like some mountain of desolation and grandeur on the rim of the horizon, long strata of cirrhous clouds stretched from north to south in parallel lines. The eastern horrizon was crowded with pink cloudlets, darkening to deep purple on the sky line, and in the zenith, the faint and feathery shadows were crimsoned, and then gently vanished, as the sun fell from his orbit into the burning and glowing west.

An Evening Star

But all the other cirrhous flakes of cloudlets were masses of burning gold resting on foundations of grey vapour, which, in turn, as the departing rays of the dying sun struck them, were transmuted into red and yellow nuggets of molten metal, with an occasional break through the green sky, as of an alloy to test their value. I had to shade my eyes from their blinding splendours, until, with involution after involution, the glowing masses melted into each other, or dropped their golden radiances from cloud to cloud as the sun descended. It was as if some potent stage-manager or stage-painter was flinging his majestic colours broadcast over the vast curtain of the heavens, until, his palette run dry and exhausted, the splendours faded away, so silently, so gradually, with so much tenderness and pathos, that I could only think of the farewell kiss of a dying child, or the gradual fading away of those spirit-faces that artists have drawn on canvas, but never seen in the flesh. Then out came one star, dancing and caracoling in the broad heavens that he had now to himself. "Pah!" I cried, for the sorrow of the thing had crept into my heart, "it is like a ballet dancer on the altar of a deserted cathedral!"

My Doppelganger

"Say rather a herald of eternity!" said a voice, and a soft hand rested on my arm. I did not shake it off. I did not shake it off, because it was my Poet, my dreamer of dreams, my *Alter Ego*—the being with whom alone I can freely converse, and open out my mind with the certainty of being understood and believed. With him alone I am at ease, for to him alone am I intelligible. When I converse with other men I feel that I am speaking to statues, which stare irresponsively at me. When I speak with him I know I am addressing a soul. With other men I speak about human topics:—their politics, their commerce, their wars, their food, their dress. With him I speak of higher subjects,—the soul, eternity, the course of history, the trend of human events; Nature,—the eternal Spring, earth with its thousand aspects, the Heavens with their dark secrets, Life, and the shadow that waits for us all with the keys. If ever I touch on merely human things, a cloud of disappointment and vexation crosses his fine features. He is eloquently silent, and runs his fingers through tangled and uncombed locks, with just now the winter blossoms beginning to gleam through their gold. When I speak of higher things, his face glows. The fountains of the great deep are broken up.

An Apology for Anger

"What are those tears for?" he said, for my eyes were red with the sorrow of the sunset,—type of all ephemeral and vanishing things.

"For the sorrow of the world," I said, "and its sad destinies; for the perishing of all that is most fair, and the permanence of all that is foul and sordid. For the earth, which is but a cradle of suffering; and for man, who weeps when he is born."

"But you were more than this," he replied. "You were angry, and you used a scornful expression. Now, that is an evil mood towards Nature or towards man."

"Angry?" I cried. "Yes! I was. Who could help being angry in face of such deceitful and fading splendours? And then, as if to mock me, out comes that flippant and foolish star, dancing on the floor of the firmament, and flapping his fingers in my face as if in derision? Why, 'tis all mockery, mockery,—earth, and sea, and sky, and the faces of children, and the roses in my garden! Underneath all is the grinning visage and the castanets of Death!"

"Yes! yes!" he cried, with an impatience that rarely showed itself in his fine face or courtly manners. "But why anger? Don't you know that the inevitable is also the indispensable; and that it would never do for ephemeral beings such as we to be brought face to face with immortal beauty?"

Res Caducae

"There! You are always saying hard things," I cried. "The inevitable is the indispensable! What is it? What do you mean?"

"What do I mean? Why, we have talked of these things a hundred times over, and yet you ask me what I mean. I mean simply this, that so long as we are but passing shadows, we are not capable of being confronted with infinite and permanent realities. That in fact, permanence is not for us, only the *res caducae,* the flitting and fading phantoms that belong to an order of things that preludes the stability of eternity. Hark, friend! If all that splendour over which you now wept had remained, you would have tired of it in an hour and gone back to your books, murmuring: 'The eye is not filled with seeing; nor the ear satisfied with hearing.'"

It was true; and I had only to take refuge in silence.

"But mark how foolishly you spoke," he continued. "You wept over a piece of painted vapour —a little aerial moisture reddened by the setting sun; and you ridiculed what? The mighty sun, Arcturus, to which *your* sun is but a farthing candle, and which is now lighting up with unimaginable splendour the atmospheres of planets, to which our little earth is but a sand-grain. It is the old, old story. We cling to shadows and weep for them; and then blaspheme the Eternal."

Mocking the Eternal

"But, but," I cried, confused, you speak thus because you are not mortal. You have no human feeling. You live amongst the stars. There is nothing but cold, frozen thought up there on the altitudes where you dwell with your poets and dreamers. Look, you, my friend, the tear that soils the cheek of a little child is more to me than if your Arcturus were to heave and burst his elephantine bulk, and strew all space with his fragments. This is our world; and it is enough for us, at least whilst we are here."

"Quite true," he replied. "Then why are you always dreaming, dreaming, dreaming of other things? Why did you sadden in that sunset? It was like yourself, transient and paltry. Why did you not accept it as such? No! You went out beyond it; and you said it mocked you; and you, in turn, mocked the Eternal."

"It's enough to make any one savage," I cried,—"this eternal duplicity and deception of Nature. Lo! splendours as of the third heavens, and behold, they are gone whilst we cry to them to remain forever!"

"'Tis not a subject for mockery, or savage anger," he said, meekly.

"What then?" I cried.

"Infinite Pity!" he said.

Infinite Pity

"And men, with their infinite and ever-winding intrigues and deceptions?"

"Infinite Pity!" he said.

"And those white women, half-angels, until you suddenly see some flash of soul that reveals their deformity?"

"Infinite Pity!" he said.

"And those placed aloft in the high domains of the world, to be burning and shining lights to their generation, until you come near and see the flame of their spirit flickering, unsteady, darkened with the smut of carbon, and swaying to and fro in every gust of passion?"

"Infinite Pity!" he said.

"And mighty statesmen, ordering the destinies of nations, but prepared to change sides and principles for a piece of ribbon from a sovereign, or a whiff of popularity from the great unwashed!"

"Infinite Pity!" he answered.

"And teachers,—poets, preachers, prophets, with their 'everlasting yeas,' and 'everlasting noes,' leading mankind by the hand up the steep escarpments where valour and truth alone can find a footing; and then suddenly descending to the basest levels to quarrel over their cups, or play the valet to some coroneted patron?"

"Infinite Pity!" he still answered.

A Distinction

I shook him off—this *Doppelganger* of mine. I was wroth with him and with myself, wroth, above all, because I had to determine was this the final answer—the last response to the eternal enigma.

Infinite Pity!

For all suffering and harmless things, yes! For the redbreast frozen into iron on a January morning; for the wounded creature of the woods that creeps into its hole to die unseen; for the silver wonder of the brooks that lies gasping on the grass, held in the fierce steel of the fisherman; for my aged dog, who lies in his hutch in my yard and looks at me with such piteous dying eyes, they haunt me all the day long; for our human brother or sister, who calls for night, and night forgets its mercy, and who watches the faint dawn glimmering through the window-pane, with the prospect of another day of anguish; for the wretch in the dock, with the merciless faces around him, steeled against all compassion by merciless law; for the victim helped to the scaffold, his arms supported by warders lest he should fall; for the last October sunset, and the last rose that hovers in my garden over beds of snow,—for all weak things, for all stricken things, for all sad things, and all dying things,—Infinite Pity! Yes! By all means! But for all the strength that smites pitilessly; for all the cunning that intrigues successfully; for all the duplicity that lies boldly; for all the smiles that cheat blandly; for all the tyranny that grinds mercilessly; for all that is strong and severe and pitiless; for all that is loathsome and degrading and masculated,—Infinite Pity? No!

A Good Shepherd

As the prophet of old foretold of the sweet and gentle Shepherd of Humanity, I think I could gather up and fold in my arms all tender, gentle, and frail things on earth, no matter how passion-swept, or into what deep abysses betrayed by their own inexperience or the malevolence of others. Nay, even for one that "wanders like a lost soul upon the Stygian bank, waiting for waftage," I feel I could have great pity, which is akin to great love. But for the base nature, that comes to you sometimes in life, rubbing his shoulder against yours to pick your pockets, tossing out carelessly and confidingly a petty secret to get at your sealed and solemn sorrows, and then snap you up, as Vivien did Merlin in the enchanted oak; for the creature who comes fawning and purring around you, proffering his petty gifts, and protesting his disinterestedness until, thrown off your guard, you fling the creature what he wants, and he goes his way, his hand on the button of his pocket; for all puny souls that have no circumference or scope of vision beyond that of a coin, and who think more of a piece of ribbon than of the colours of a sunset, and whose base insolence to the weak is hardly more irritating than their base subservience to the strong,—I confess to a feeling of repulsion akin to that one feels for slimy and dangerous things; no great wish to crush or annihilate, but a decided desire to shun and avoid, and place some impassable thing, an ocean or a Sahara, between us!

A Miracle of Adaptation

And yet—are not these things, too, a subject for infinite wonder,—wonder at the miracle of adaptation that seems to exist everywhere? For, after all, without moral evil how can there be moral virtue? If all men, by a miracle, or rather by a transformation of our nature from its striking and painful contrasts, were reduced to a dead level of uniform goodness and perfection, where would be those trials that develop all the grandeur of the great and heroic? If Xanthippe did not create the genius of a Socrates, she at least has helped us to know him better. Without an Antiochus, should we have had the heroism of the Maccabees; the grave chastity of Susannah, without the perfidy of the elders? Had there been no Nero or Domitian, where would be the superb record of the countless martyrs of the Coliseum? It needed the malice of a Gesler to create a William Tell, the state policy of Napoleon to paint on the pages of history the gentle bravery of the Duc d'Enghien or the fearless manhood of Hofer. We could not weep for the martyred nuns of Compiègne had there been no Robespierre or Marat. And to ascend to the highest—where would have been the supreme tragedy of our race, if Jewish priests had been generous, and Pilate had hearkened to the plea for justice from the lips of his wife?

Evil the Root of Good

So, too, on a lowlier scale, we find that all good seems to arise from evil. Endurance cannot exist without hardship, patience without annoyance, serenity without pain, joyousness without injustice, chastity without temptation, meekness without provocation. If the world was reduced to one dead level of happiness, mankind would grow hebetated from want of energy. It was cold and hunger that framed the flint arrowheads and bone needles, the relics of pre-Adamite man over yonder in Kent's Cavern. It is the sense of the same evils that puts Australian beef on the London markets, and places the skin of an Arctic seal on the shoulders of some woman of fashion. Necessity, that is, pain, begets energy; and energy develops faculties that otherwise would weaken and perish from lack of exercise. In the moral order, it is the same. Moral evil begets Virtue. The narrow, distorted, and vicious soul, prone to deceit and aggression, and chuckling at its own trivial and transitory success over some larger and nobler mind, is quite unconscious that it has been the means, the fertilizing agent, of a larger growth in the latter. "All things coöperate unto good for those called to be saints," said the Apostle. And may not this principle be the strongest proof of immortality,—that the greatest evil shall produce the largest good, and from the dark and bitter root of death shall spring the undying flower of immortality?

Other Eyes than Ours

In the higher life, I often think that the same inability to penetrate into the minds and understand the feelings of others lies at the root of all these racial and religious prejudices that have wrought such havoc to humanity. It is the rarest of rare talents—this of being able to see things through other eyes than ours. If one considers for a moment that each mind has its own idiosyncrasies, and clings to its own infallibility, it is easy to understand the difficulty of reconciling the repellent tendencies and mutual antipathies that must exist between races and religions. Home influences, early education, later reading of one-sided and prejudiced books, the interchange of common and hostile ideas on one subject—must of necessity create a bulwark of prejudice that it seems impossible to break through or subvert. We all know the totally absurd opinions that are entertained towards churches of different denominations,—towards members of a hostile race, or a hostile political party. In the vast majority of such cases the prejudices are irremovable and incradicable. No amount of reasoning can convince; no appeal can soften. They have never learned to go outside themselves and see through others' eyes. Man, to be wise, must study the vices and virtues of which human nature is capable, first in himself, and then, in all good faith, in others.

Early Prejudices

I well remember a distinguished convert to the Catholic Church telling me that, when a boy, and even when he had passed into adolescence, he never passed the humble and modest Catholic church in the city where he lived, without flying past it at racing speed. When I asked him what he dreaded, he answered he didn't know! It was nothing specific; but some vague sensation that there was something inside those walls horrible beyond imagination; some occult and dark doings, which were not to be examined or approached, but fled from in terror. It was clearly his early education,—the home and Sunday-school teaching that the Catholic Church stood for something unnameable—that it was the symbol of darkness, the outer shell and simulacrum of everything men shrink from and avoid. Probably that man would have carried these prejudices to his grave if he had not met with some one who saw through his eyes, made account of all his perverse imaginations, and gradually opened the eyes of his mind to see what horrible and unreal phantasms had been haunting it, and how needful it was to employ the prompt exorcism of reason to expel them for ever. And strange to say, this was but an accident,—the accident of his sister's conversion, and the accident of his proceeding to London in a frenzy of zeal and anger, first to remonstrate with the priest who had received her into the Church, and then to convert that priest from the errors of Catholicism. He met his Ananias, and the scales fell from his eyes.

The Wisdom of Experience

But if we were to suppose, *per impossible,* that we could stand by the side of our brothers who differ so widely and radically from us, and with a sympathy born of Christian charity could enter into their passionate prejudices and feelings, and make allowance for all the converging causes that led up to this hardening of the heart, and think what we ourselves might have been had we been born and educated in similar circumstances, how it would widen our horizon of thought, help us to look around things, instead of merely at them, and help us to deal gently with all those unmeaning and irrational ideas that grow so slowly and take such deep and almost ineradicable root in human souls. The thoughts of men on all possible subjects differ as widely as their features; and even where they externally seem to agree, that is, when placed in words or actions, there is still a profound difference. And we must not suppose that all the wisdom of world is stored up and centered beneath the *dura mater* of our brain. *Qui vit sans folie n'est pas si sage qu'il croit;* and whatever wisdom or knowledge we possess comes mainly through experience, which always teaches the kindred and collateral lesson of our own impotence and folly.

The Insane

No man can judge of insanity but the insane. There are as many forms of insanity as there are brain-cells; and, if you look over the motor and sensory areas, and try to study the internal construction and ramification of each with its millions of cells, and remember how one diseased cell might easily set up that want of proportion in ideas, or that lack of nerve control which we designate as insanity, it is easy to perceive the value of the opinions of experts. There is no stronger argument against capital punishment than the impossibility of determining who is sane, and who is insane; and there is something pathetic and tragic in the curious tradition that a man's life may be made dependent on the opinion of two experts who, presumably sane themselves, are utterly unqualified to express an opinion on the condition of the insane. The secret working of the brain-cells of a Plato or a Shakespeare is not more of a mystery to a Hottentot, who has just emerged into civilization than the secret working of the diseased brain is to one who has never had experience in his own mind of that phenomenal, and yet quite common disturbance. Few men pass through life without acting once at least in an insane manner; and if we could read human thoughts as Omniscience does, what a vast and tumultuous asylum would not this earth appear! "This beautiful madhouse of the earth," said Jean Paul. "Life is a tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," saith Shakespeare.

Delusions

The senses, the imagination, the words of men, traditions, the habits of life all around us, the stereotyped forms and manners of society, the lies that are fossilized by the ages, the tricks and pranks that mask deception under an appearance of *bonhomie,* and, above all, our own poor selves seem to be engaged in a horrid conspiracy to make our lives one long delusion until our final *consummatum.* To know that happiness is in ourselves, and not in our circumstances; to be able to take the ordinary and accredited beliefs of men and sift them, and examine them, and separate the chaff of folly from the grain of wisdom; to look out with our own eyes upon the world, and to take sidelights on human happenings and events from others' experience,—is a very rare talent. We run amuck with the crowd when the panic of life seizes us. We follow its train of thought, adopt its habits, walk in its ways, although we loathe ourselves for so doing. It is a rare thing to see a strong man step aside and pursue his own course undeterred by human hostile opinion; who has the strength of silent scorn to uphold him, and let the mad world wag on to destruction. "Oh, all you that pass by the way," saith the beggar with the crucifix, whilst the gay and happy pairs of youthful lovers, conning flowers or toying with jewels, pass down the staircases and corridors of life. "Come apart and rest a little while," was the sweet invitation of the Divine Being, who knew how easily his poor disciples would throng after the ruck and rout of motley crowds to share in their poor, sickly, and dishonest adulation. "Come apart," —into the desert aloof and alone,—the silent stars above your heads, and the Eternal One by your side.

An Example

I once knew a man of imaginative temperament who laboured all his life long under a singular delusion. He was a merchant in a great city; and, like all other merchants, his daily life was the drudgery of living from ten o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening in a damp, dirty office, screened away from a vault filled with vast puncheons of wine and spirits, cobwebbed and grey with the dust of antiquity. The office window, very dirty also, and lined with venerable cobwebs, barely allowed the eye to rest on the blank wall of another warehouse about six feet across a narrow alley. Even in Summer and at noonday the gas flared above his desk; and through the twilight the figures of men—porters, labourers, customers—passed to and fro all day long to exchange opinions and transact business. The daily programme of the poor slave was:

Rise at 8 A. M.
Breakfast at 8:45.
Train to city.
Office work from 10 A. M. to 6 P. M.
Train homewards.
Dinner at 7 P. M.
Newspaper.
Bed, 10 P. M.

Sunday was broken by a morning service and an afternoon that seemed interminable. He took a yearly holiday at some European watering-place where he was killed from ennui and society.

Chained in a Cellar

He was a wealthy man, but not a happy man. During his first twenty years, buoyed up and carried on by the stream of youthful hopefulness and ambition, he really exulted in his work, although the frictions of daily life began to wear down his nerves, and the question would persistently arise and refuse an answer: "Whereunto tends all this waste and work?" Then, one day, he took up a volume of essays dealing with the attractions of country life; the folly of treading the daily mill until we dropped into the grave; and the wisdom of saying at some period or other of life, "Soul, sleep now, and take thy rest!" The idea haunted him for weeks and weeks; and the recollection of a certain pretty villa down near the sea, where he had spent a few summer weeks, came up at office-time to disturb his serenity, and compel him to think that he was spending all the most glorious years of his life—a slave chained in a cellar. One day, too, a farming acquaintance of his dropped in, and, looking in a half-frightened way about the lugubrious place, said: "Good heavens, man, surely you don't live here? Why, one hour of these wine-smells and spirit-odours would chloroform me into eternity! Come out, man, and live a human life! Come out, and see our trees and rivers, and hear the winds whistling, and the brooks laughing, and the birds singing, and breathe the honest air of heaven, and not the mephitic vapours of the tomb." The merchant shook his head, but the lesson went home.

Only a Little Longer

He now bent eagerly to his task, because he had a definite object before him,—namely, to build up as rapidly as possible a fortune that would help him to get away from the chain-gang and the *forçat,* and spend the evening of his life in tranquil study (for he was a reader) and calm contemplation and enjoyment of nature unto the end. One morning he noticed a grey patch over his left ear; and he thought, I must push on and work harder, if I am to have time for my evening holiday at the end. And all the time that villa above the sea would float in a misty picture, framed in cloud shadows, but richly gilded, above his dusty, ink-stained desk; and every night, as he closed the latter with a snap, he looked around and said: "Only a little longer; a few years more, and farewell, you dusty wine-bins and cobwebbed bottles, for ever and ever!" And then he began to watch the papers for advertisements of sales of seaside villas; and he began to dream, and dream, and ever dream of vast, beautiful oceans, with the white flame of a sail on the horizon, and long, purple twilights that dreamed themselves away into night, and a dusky library crammed with all precious volumes, and peace, peace, and rest, rest, for the long evenings of a happy life!

"To Let"

At last the wished-for opportunity seemed to arise in accordance with his wishes. He had seen in the late springtime just the thing he had dreamed of so long,—the long white villa facing the ocean, the little lawn in front sloping gently downwards; the sudden, abrupt cliff, the waves crawling or tumbling in hoarse riotousness beneath; and, behind, the deep, dewy fields of a valley, where a brown cow was grazing calmly, and a few sheep dotted the upland beyond, where the trees fringed the horizon and broke up the blue radiance of the sky. If he could have designed into actual existence the place and the circumstances he had so often desired, it could not have been better framed unto his wishes. With beating heart he read the legend "To Let" on the window-pane, and hastened to inquire—and purchase. He was so eager now to get away from the wine cave and the cellar that he would not hire the place. No! he should become the absolute owner, so that no man could ever disturb his inheritance of such an elysium. It should be his from the zenith to the nadir,—from the centre of the earth to the dome of heaven; and no man should venture on the sacred precincts without license or on trespass. He was surprised, almost shocked, to find how little was asked for it. He closed the bargain at once, and became the happy possessor.

Ridiculed

Then the ravens began to croak. They predicted that he would tire of the place in a month, in a quarter, at furthest in a year. "Wait," they said, "till November. Wait till the rains come down and the sea is blotted out, and he shall not see from week's end to week's end the face of a human being, except a half-tipsy fisherman or a strait-laced coast guard. Then he will pine for the electric light and tram, for the roar and bustle of the city." He heard it all, and calmly winked to himself. Envy! envy! The bane of gods and men! The ever-present, never-exorcised demon that haunts all human hearts, and makes them sink at the thought of others' happiness! No matter: he will go on in spite of all; nay, he will bring down all these croakers in the early Summer and kill them, one by one, by the spectacle of his happiness! Well, he did bring them down, but happily there was no homicide. They came, admired, rejoiced, and departed. He showed them how easily and pleasantly one could slip down in undress in the early, warm summer morning, and descending the spiral iron ladder, plunge at once into the glorious sea. He taught them how to lounge, and kill time, and loll upon garden chairs after dinner, and smoke away the long, delicious summer evenings, and play nap in the open air, and drink—sherbet? And if any landsman tired of the sea, he took him to the valley and expatiated upon cows and corn.

A Fragment of Eden

They all admitted that it was glorious, delicious, a fragment of Eden very much improved, because for the sluggish Tigris here was the heaving and restless, the treacherous and magic sea. They all said how delightful it was to go to sleep with your high windows open, and the breath of the clover was borne into your bedroom with the murmurs of the enchanted sea; and how transcendently pleasant it was to sit down to one's breakfast after an appetising morning bath, and break your egg or fish whilst you glanced at the broad levels of shining sea before the window. But those evenings, those celestial evenings, when the setting sun empurpled the great cliffs opposite, and the vast mirror of the ocean modestly mirrored in pink and gold the gorgeous decorations of rock and headland; and tiny feathers of yacht-sails, or the larger canvases of fishing-boats swept as in a hollow mirror from rim to rim of the horizon; and the plash of oars came up from the sea; and the muffled voices of young girls came borne in upon the warm breeze; and the great moon came up blood-red from her sea-bath and paled into yellow glory as she mounted her steep escarpment of the sky,—ah, those celestial evenings! No wonder anxious hearts should whisper, in affected depreciation: "You have no chance of heaven, old man, after this!"

"What a Paradise!"

But he would only laugh—the happy possessor always laughs—and puff away at his cigar in happy contentment, and rail at the dusty city, and the noises and the cobwebbed cellar, and say: "My dear fellow, half the world does not know what life is."

And the young men applauded and said:

"Quite right. When you've made your pile, it is wise and right to step down and aside, and leave a chance for the young."

But the old men, although they hankered after such freedom and happiness, whispered to each other as they sped upwards to the city by the evening train:

"Do you know, I think old ——— seemed to look wistfully after us. Wait till November! I'd bet a dozen of the best Havanas he'll be back in his office again!"

But their wives said:

"What a delightful place for children to play in for three months of Summer! What a shame that such a place should be in the hands of a wretched old bachelor!"

They had just been praising his cook, and his dinners, and his delicious tea; they had still wet on their pretty lips:

"Oh, Mr. ———, what a Paradise!"

Memory

And so the weeks sped on. The "Villa" had almost become a show place. Every visitor to the seaside should see it, and praise it. The owner was very happy.

Sometimes, indeed, the days dragged heavily onward. It was not always sunshine. There were times when a cold, grey look was on the sea, and the cliffs in the distance across the bay looked black and threatening; and one by one, the visitors were departing for their winter homes, and the faces of the little children began to disappear. Then the terrific tyranny of old habits began to assert itself. The holiday was over; and every fibre and muscle began to clamor for old occupations,—the never-ceasing, ever-rolling routine of hours consecrated to business, and hostile to slothfulness. He argued and expostulated against the tyranny in vain. He pleaded that he had had a life of unremitting toil and anxiety; that he had a right to rest in the evening of life; that he was past labour now; and that peace and dignity were the rightful perquisites and perogatives of age. In vain! Every faculty was clamouring for employment, protesting against the degredation of being wasted away in rusty sloth; and the imagination, spurred by the tyranny of habit, and beaten back upon itself by the frigid aspect of external nature, began to call up with tender and solemn pity the days of labour that had passed; the fifty years in the warehouse; and all the many circumstances, which, bald and vulgar and prosaic enough in reality, came now from the caves of the past under the softened and hallowed light of memory, the great transformer, and scene-shifter, and stage-manager of life.

Despondency

He tried to shake off the despondency, but in vain. He set himself, during these sad September days, to the task of reading and working. He laid out a programme for the Winter months. He would read Shakespeare through and through. He commenced. After half an hour's conscientious labour on "Hamlet" he grew tired, and went out. Yes! there was the calm, irresponsive, Sphinx-like face of the sea, cold and grey like that battered and mutilated demon-face that stares over the desert sands, and seems to be contemplating infinity from eternity. He went back to his beautiful library, sick at heart. The early fires were burning in the grate,—of summer valedictory, of winter premonitory. The beautiful books in all manner of costly bindings gleamed from the shelves; and between them and above them, shone fair pictures, with deep, rich, gorgeous frames; and lapping their edges were fairy palms and costly evergreens, purchased in the richest nurseries in the city. What do I want? the man cried. Here is what I have been seeking after for thirty years; and lo! it is ashes in my mouth. He went out again. Not a sail flamed across the surface of the deep; not a fishing-boat made a speck across the grey monotony. And all was silent, songs of maidens, laughter of children, except with the sounds of eternity.

Loneliness

Two hours to luncheon! He took his cane and went out. He called on the curate, asked, begged, implored him to dine with him. He had not troubled much about him while the summer visitors were flitting around. He strolled over the cliffs. A few peasants were digging out potatoes; the white sheep nibbled lazily the short grass; far beneath, the waves rolled heavily in, heaving as if in gasps of spent energy their bulk of water against the broken boulders; the grey, solemn light lay brooding over sea and land; far away, far, far away, on the horizon line, a plume of dark vapour marked the course of a passing ship. And everywhere silence, deep, terrible silence as of chaos before the turbulent voices of humanity were heard; as of a ruined world, when the voice of humanity will be heard no more,—silence, except for the wash of the waters, that would be soothing perhaps to tired and worn nerves, but that now sounded harsh and hoarse in the ears of the man who had passed out of touch with nature, because he had stepped out of his place, and refused to take his part in the vast working-sheds and laboratories of the universe.

Alone

He lunched with little appetite, and drank more than was good for him. Then he lounged along the lawn and smoked cigar after cigar. Twenty times he looked at his watch, and counted the hours to dinner. He took up "Hamlet" again; and remained for some time brooding over the soliloquy of suicide. He flung down the book, and went out. He tried to get into conversation with a few rough, weather-tanned fishermen, who lounged up against the quay wall. He could only elicit a monosyllable. He walked over the cliffs again; and after another two hours of misery, he returned to dinner. The good-natured curate was there. Two hours passed pleasantly by. Then a sick-call was brought, and the man was again alone,—alone with one word the curate, with no ill intention, had spoken: "How in God's name, can you live here, after your experience of city life?" He brooded over it the whole evening through. He went to bed in a cheerless mood, and dreamt that the spirit of the Sea, the Old Man of the Sea, stood beside his bed, and kept murmuring all the night through,—"Alone!" "Alone!" "Alone!" He woke up in the dreary dawn, and heard the hoarse wash of the sea murmuring: "Alone!" "Alone!" "Alone!"

Winter Closes In

And suddenly, swiftly, as if in a sudden eclipse of light and cessation of sound, the Winter closed in. There never had been so short a Summer. There had been no Autumn. The days seemed to close up, as you would close a telescope; and the nights swooped down and hung their raven wings, poised above the desolation of nature, as if they could never close and vanish again. The dreadful loneliness and idleness hung heavily on the spirit of the man. He began to loathe the face of the sea. It seemed to stare back on him from its great expanses, cold and colourless as a corpse; and the great cliffs beyond seemed to close in like walls of a grave of granite, so dark and gloomy, so hard and adamantine they seemed. He ceased gazing on the gloomy spectacle, and turned aside to the valley. Here, too, was all the aspect of wintry desolation—heavy fogs morning and evening, withered bracken, blanched grass which the cows ate reluctantly, and broken mangolds which his workmen had scattered here and there across the field. And if he lifted his eyes, there afar off was the thin dark line of the horizon, where the cold blue light seemed to shiver under the lowering and ragged skies.

A Crisis

To accentuate his misery, the morning paper brought news of the great city,—of its theatres, with new plays and brilliant companies; of its concerts, where world-famed artists sang for money or charity; of great balls with military bands, and long columns of the names of citizens well-known to him; and the vision of the brilliant and well-lighted city, of its long rows of gas lamps and electric lamps, of its rumbling tramcars, its wet pavements, the crowds of men and women passing to and fro, and all the human and even tender associations which are everywhere leagued with great masses of humanity, rose up before him as he sauntered in melancholy madness above the sea, or stared, with his finger in the pages of the unread book, at the coals that sparkled and burned in the grate by his lonely hearthside. It was so sad, nothing but shame and the dread of being laughed at kept him from fleeing instantly from the uncanny place. Then one day his two servants gave notice simultaneously. It capped his climax of misery. Next evening he was in the city.

Back Again

Although he had been but a few weeks absent, he felt like a stranger in a strange land. The tumult of the streets thrilled him through and through; the vibration of the tramcar seemed to penetrate his nerves, and he trembled as he rose up awkwardly from the seat, and groped his way with many a stop and stumble towards the entrance. He glided like a shamed ghost through the streets, afraid to be recognized; afraid of the *Hallo, old man!* which would mean insufferable things. He watched with the interest of a child who had come up to the city for the first time, the lighted shops, the sparkling jewelry, the long counters in warehouses, with their lines of well-groomed clerks and well-dressed girls, curious, watchful, eager; he sniffed up the odours from the restaurants as a hungry man maddened with the want of food; he could almost have hugged the newsboys, who shouted: *E-e-evening Echo-o-o!* At last he stood at the entrance to the narrow street where the offices and warehouses were, and paused. How would he enter? How face the welcome he was sure to receive; or worse still, the smiles and winks of his employés, with their deadly, yet kindly meaning: *I told you!*

A Dramatic Entry

He did the wisest thing he could do under the circumstances. He entered the old premises dramatically. That is—he almost leaped in upon the sawdusted flags, shouted to the alarmed porters and labourers: "Clear out of my way!" pushed one or two aside, who thought an escaped maniac had got amongst them, and then took a hop, step and jump, and landed safely in his old chair beside the grimy, ink-covered desk. When he was recognised there was a shout of laughter, and all was over. The ancient partner came in.

"You've come back?"

"Yes! Don't say, for God's sake, 'I knew it!' or 'I told you so!'"

"All right!"

"I'll take my old place and hand you back the rhino!"

"Very good. 'Twas a tight shave though. McAllister wanted to throw ten thousand into the concern to-day."

"You didn't?" with a face of alarm.

"No! I expected something. See! your name is yet on our bill-heads!"

"Thanks, old man! Now, tell me, is the old house let as yet?"

"I'm not sure. I think not. The bills were in the window last Sunday."

"Would you—would you—mind seeing after it for me?"

"All right. To-morrow, or perhaps Thursday—"

"Great Scott, man! Some pedler will have swallowed it up by then. Look here! 'Tis only five o'clock. Run down to Henry's, will you?"

"All right. You're in the deuce of a fright."

"No matter. And ask Henry to put in an ad. to-morrow:

"To be let or sold. Beautiful marine villa; splendid sea view; lawn; spiral staircase to sea; beach; meadow-land, etc., etc. But—no name! mind, no name!"

"All right! Of course, you're coming to us until you settle?"

"May I? You're too good. But how can I face Kate? She'll torment the life out of me!"

"Never fear! She's too glad to see you back. And won't the youngsters kick up the deuce of a shindy!"

"Gosh! I hope they will. Let me see. I have time to run down to London. I must bring them something. You'll come back, won't you, and tell us about the house?"

A Reverie

Then he sank into a pleasant reverie, watching all the while the corpulent and pompous puncheons, and seeming to expect every moment a salvo from the vast tiers of wine bottles that seemed like tiny batteries of artillery peeping from their loopholes and embrasures. When no one was looking, he stepped softly down from his desk, and going over he actually kissed the steel ribs of an old Jack Falstaff of a whiskey cask, that had shone and glistened in its dusty cave for half a century. Then closing-time came, his partner returned, and he stepped out on the wet pavement again. For a moment he watched the crowd of people passing and repassing, a motley crowd, made up of every element of humanity, from the young empresses who, clad in their furs and sealskins, seemed to spurn the very flags beneath their feet, to the poor, decrepit creatures who begged an alms, or the wretched and degraded humanity which gathered around the doors of saloons. Then, with a sigh and a little smile he passed on, paused for a moment, and leaned over the parapet of the bridge and saw a Milky Way of lights on quays and ships and waves, and then, humbled and happy, he accompanied his partner to his hospitable home.

And Then?

A few weeks later he came in as usual one morning to business, put up his overcoat and hat, sorted, opened, and read his letters, wrote his replies, gave his little orders here and there, read the morning paper, and went out to a neighbouring restaurant at the men's dinner hour, for a modest lunch. When one o'clock had struck, and the porters and labourers trooped back from dinner, they found him asleep in his office chair. It was unusual, but they did not mind. "Old age!" they said. Later on in the day, he still slept; and then they thought he was unusually still. They shook him up and called his name. There was no answer,—none until the Great Assize. He had died at his task,—chained as he would have said with bitterness a few months ago, chained like a galley-slave to his task. But the bitterness had disappeared under the test of experience. He had died in harness, in the midst of his work; and what death could be more honourable or desirable?

A Garden Dialogue

As I closed these random reflections on things in general, I sat in my garden in the twilight of a long summer evening. The sun had set, and the faint light was wavering between day and night. A huge bat was flying round and round in circles that seemed to be grooved for him in the air. Over my head a tiny spider hung down on a single thread. There was an odour of jasmine and mignonette in the warm air. Close to my head was a thick clump of laurel; and one white tea-rose hung her beautiful petals against it as if for support. On the rim of one fair petal was a brown line, the first symptom and harbinger of decay. The air was so still I could hear her say:

"Why am I sad?" you ask. "Because in a few weeks, a few days, I shall be dead,—buried there beneath the brown earth, whilst you are a perennial, an immortal!"

"And is death an evil, and is immortality on earth a boon?" asked the spirit of the laurel.

"Certainly," said the rose. "Even my short life beneath the blue sky, kissed by the winds, fanned by the wings of birds, has been supremely happy."

"True, but see what is before me!" said the spirit of the laurel. "I have no Summer like you, because I am not a flower. But I have a Winter before me, and many, many Winters. Think of eight hours of pallid sunshine, and sixteen hours of darkness deep as the pit; think of the rough winds that tear through me, the frosts that bite me, the snows that lean their icy burden on me, the lightnings that blast me, the men who shear and clip every little tiny shoot I put forth, until now, in my old age, I am childless and flowerless as the grave. Oh, my little sister, grieve not. You have been loved. That atones for death. Do not covet an immortality of loveless desolation!"

And the rose said:

"Yea. Be it so. Only let me lean against thee until the last."

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Deacidified using the Bookkeeper proces
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: May 2009

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